Celebrity pg 30

Aniston pokes fun at media over coverage



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HALIFAX • WEEKEND DECEMBER 12-14 2008 metronews.ca



Sports pg 18

Halifax loses bid to host Vanier Cup

Gas prices still dropping in city

PUMP PRICES Didn't think your gas could get any cheaper?

Think again: Experts expect pump prices to hit about 74 cents per litre this morning in Halifax, a four-cent drop.

Prices haven't been that low since December 2003. In Toronto, gas was selling yesterday for 69.5 cents per litre at some stations, while in New Brunswick it was around 70.5 cents per litre. **METRO HALIFAX**

ShareYourViews
halifaxletters@metronews.ca

World pg 10



Suicide bomb kills dozens

Local pg 4

Mother pleads with court

Comments pg 14

Fatigue sets in on politics

Movies pg 20

Golden Globes nominees

Canada pg 7

Ottawa busted on EI crime



RYAN TAPLIN/METRO HALIFAX

A seagull takes a break on a baseball-field light stand as the Tufts Cove generating station looms in the background on Thursday. The province announced a new electricity conservation agency at a media briefing Thursday.

Generating a buzz

Electricity conservation agency coming

JENNIFER TAPLIN
jennifer.taplin@metronews.ca

A new electricity conservation agency is on the way.

After a 56-page report by a Dalhousie consultation team, the province has decided to launch a new electricity agency.

Its purpose is to dole out money and oversee programs geared toward reducing electricity in the province.

"You need to think of it as a highly focused not-for-profit business," said David Wheeler, Dalhousie's dean of management, at a media briefing yesterday.

"It will not become some sprawling bureaucracy; it will be run in very business-like terms to deliver results."

"It will not become some sprawling bureaucracy; it will be run in very business-like terms to deliver results."
David Wheeler, Dalhousie dean of management, on the new electricity agency

For example, a company or individual who wants to retrofit office buildings to make them more energy efficient would be able to apply to this agency.

The agency would provide funding, but also make sure the project is producing results.

"The possibilities are limitless," Wheeler said. "The trick is to have the money follow the best value for money options … This will allow people to move on the things that really matter."

The independent, non-profit agency will be funded by Nova Scotia Power Inc. Alan Richardson with NSP said the company is looking to find more support for customers who want to conserve.

"The faster we can ramp it up the better," he said.

Sound good?

Well, it won't be happening anytime soon.

Richard Hurlburt, minister responsible for Conserve Nova Scotia, said legislation will be drafted in the spring sitting of the legislature.

"We expect the new administrator to be up and running before the end of next year," he said.

Not fast enough, according to NDP MLA and environment critic Graham Steele.

"This is a good report, but the problem we've always had is this should have happened a long time ago. The government has been painfully slow moving on energy-efficiency initiatives," he said.

"If what they need is legislation, call back the legislature in January. We're ready to go on this."

U.S. wants Canada to stay past '11

AFGHANISTAN U.S. Secretary of Defence Robert Gates alluded yesterday he would like to see Canada extend its mission in Afghanistan beyond its scheduled 2011 departure date.

Gates praised Canada's work in Afghanistan and said he would be disappointed to see Canadians leave.

"They have been outstanding partners for us. And all I can tell you, as has been the case for a very long time: The longer we can have Canadian soldiers as partners, the better it is," he said.



"The longer we can have Canadian soldiers as partners, the better it is."
Robert Gates on Afghanistan

Gates, visiting a dusty NATO base near Kandahar on Thursday, criticized the United Nations and the European Union for not doing more to help stabilize the country.

Gates added he hoped a U.S. troop increase for Afghanistan would be mostly done by late spring, as his commander warned Afghan forces were three or four years from leading the fight. There are some 65,000 international troops in Afghanistan, including more than 30,000 from the United States.

Canada announced recently it would deploy an additional 250 troops to the region bringing its total to 2,750.

REUTERS

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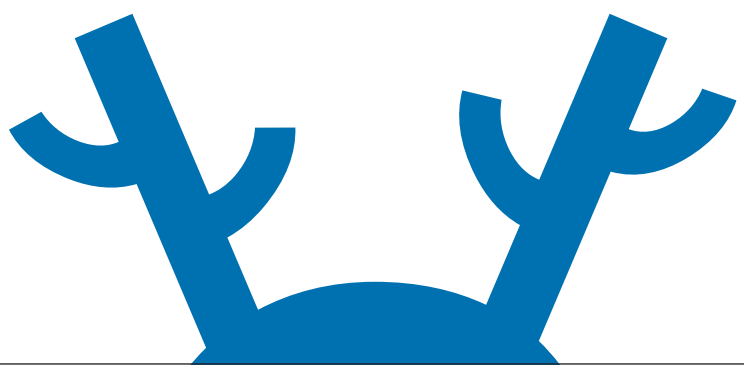
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Overnight parking ban in effect for the winter
Get those cars off the street: HRM is restarting its overnight winter parking ban starting Monday at 1 a.m. That means no parking on the street until 7 a.m. daily, regardless of what the weather is like. You're also banned from parking on the street during a snowstorm, no matter what time it is. METRO HALIFAX

Local



Passing on help for hunger

Prince Andrew High School students are collecting food for Feed Others of Dartmouth. On Dec. 17, they'll form a half-kilometre human chain from the school to a nearby church, and will pass non-perishable food items from hand to hand. Last year, they collected more than 4,000 items. To donate, call Prince Andrew High School student council at 435-8452. METRO HALIFAX

Vacancies up in Dartmouth

JENNIFER TAPLIN
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There's a higher rate of "for rent" signs in Dartmouth than in Halifax these days.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. (CMHC) released details of its fall rental-market survey yesterday.

It shows Dartmouth's vacancy rate increased to 5.5 from four per cent, while Halifax's rate is down a little to 2.7 per cent.

"Parts of Dartmouth are seeing higher rates of vacancy because I think people are moving from those areas to the newer buildings in the Halifax area," said Matthew Gilmore, an analyst with CMHC.

Across the HRM the vacancy rate is 3.4 per cent, up from 3.1 per cent last year.

You might think that with a recession, there would be more vacancies coming.

But it will be the opposite, Gilmore said.

When finances are tough, more people tend to stick to rentals instead of investing in home ownership.

HRM has one of the highest vacancy rates in the country: Only five other major cities have higher rates, and they're all in Ontario.

Gilmore said for the next six months or so, there will be even more vacancies as a number of construction projects reach completion.

They'll flood the market with new rental units, but when those fill up, the rate will come back down, Gilmore predicted.

Vacancy rates

- HRM: 3.4 per cent
- Cost of the average two-bedroom rental in the HRM: $833/month
- Truro: increased to 4.6 per cent from 3.1 per cent
- The cost of the average two-bedroom rental in Truro: $692/month
- New Glasgow: decreased to 3.7 per cent
- The cost of a two-bedroom rental in New Glasgow: $577/month

Housing prices up 7.1% over last year: StatsCan

EDANA ROBITAILLE
for Metro Halifax

New housing price indexes released by Statistics Canada show that between October 2007 and October 2008, new housing prices have actually gone up 7.1 per cent in Halifax.

The national average was down by 0.4 per cent.

Matthew Gilmore from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corp. says Halifax is different from the rest of Canada because there are record levels of employment and wage growth in spite of the economic downturn. This has kept the demand for housing high.

He thinks prices will continue to increase. Halifax has grown more slowly than cities out west, which has made the housing market more stable.

"We haven't plateaued," Gilmore said.

"We haven't reached a point where we need to come down and until demand falls off, which we're not expecting it to fall off, prices will continue to grow, which I think is comforting."

Prices have gone up six per cent for the average existing single detached home. The average price of a single detached home in Halifax is $230,000. Gilmore expects a three per cent rise for next year, which will bring the price up to $235,000.

News in brief

CRASH RCMP have identified the driver killed when a stolen car crashed near Antigonish on Wednesday. Yves Patrick Roop, 24, died on Route 245 after a brief chase with a police vehicle was called off. RCMP say they're investigating the death and reviewing the chase.

CORRECTION Ernest Fenwick MacIntosh was extradited from India to Canada in June 2007, not July 2008, as was reported in Thursday's Metro.

METRO HALIFAX

metronews.ca
What's online today.

Read Bank of Canada issues grim report at **metronews.ca/canada**

Read Harper to appoint reform-minded Senators before Christmas at **metronews.ca/canada**



Shopping **Sights of the holidays**

RYAN TAPLIN / METRO HALIFAX

A man walks past Lily's Lingerie on Dresden Row as Callie Moore, from left, Kirsten Dennis and Nikki Brown model some of the merchandise yesterday. Lily's has hosted a live mannequin show every year since 2001.

Dartmouth man, 18, charged in shooting near the IWK

CRIME Halifax Regional Police have arrested and charged an 18-year-old in a shooting outside the IWK Children's Hospital.

Police said they believe the shooting, thought to be part of an alleged Melvin/Marriott drug war, was the third time the teen had tried to kill the 27-year-old victim.

The victim was sitting in a car in the IWK parking lot Nov. 18 when he was shot in the wrist during a drive-by. The victim is believed to be a friend of the Melvin family.

A few days earlier, shots were fired at Jimmy Melvin Sr. outside Jessy's Pizza in Spryfield. Later, Jimmy Melvin Jr. was shot at a Cowie Hill apartment.

Thursday afternoon, police arrested the 18-year-old in Dartmouth. He was to appear in court Friday facing three attempted murder charges.

PAUL MCLEOD / METRO HALIFAX

Other shootings

- On Aug. 15, the victim was sitting inside an Athlone Avenue residence when a shot fired through a window and hit him
- Another incident wasn't reported to police at the time, but occurred on Lavender Walk earlier in the summer. The victim was not hurt and police aren't yet releasing details.



Wilderness area protected surrounding Amherst

The province has declared 970 hectares of land around Amherst a wilderness area. The area includes bogs, marshes, mixed forest and the endangered mainland moose. It's also part of municipal water-supply lands. METRO HALIFAX

News in brief

THEFT Halifax Regional Police are looking for four men who robbed Excitement Video on Main Street in Dartmouth on Wednesday night with a handgun. At 7:16 p.m., one of the men held the gun to the clerk's face and got some money, then fled the store. The four suspects were wearing bandanas over their faces and hoodies. No one was hurt.

ARMED ROBBERY Police are trying to determine whether the same four men were involved in a second handgun robbery at the Kwik-Way store at 99 Woodlawn Rd. less than half an hour after the Excitement Video robbery. At 7:40 p.m., four men walked into the store, one with a gun, and got away with cash. No one was hurt in this robbery, either. One of the suspects is a black male, about 25 years old, wearing a black hood and a red-and-black scarf over his face.

BUST Police seized cannabis marijuana, scales and cash during a search on Stanbury Street yesterday. They arrested and charged a man with drug offences.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Please recycle

Mom testifies son should be punished

EDANA ROBITAILLE
for Metro Halifax

A mom burst into tears Thursday as she told a Nova Scotia Supreme Court judge she wanted her son behind bars years ago.

Her son, now 18, stabbed Matthew James Ayer to death Oct. 15, 2007.

The woman said if authorities had listened to her repeated requests for help, Ayer might still be alive.

"If I could change it, I would do it,' the sobbing woman told the Ayer family.

"I'm so, so sorry for this. I'm so sorry my son did this to your son. I really am. If he had been able to get help, we wouldn't be here."

She testified yesterday her son has to be punished for what he did.

The teen, who cannot be named, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder last spring. Yesterday was the last day of arguments for deciding if he will be sentenced as an adult.

The teen had a record and had been in court several times before the murder charges.

"Each time I asked for help, I never received any. I asked them to put him in jail and they wouldn't help," the woman told Justice Suzanne Hood.

Despite the severity of his offence, she doesn't want her son going to federal prison to serve an adult sentence.

She believes he will come out worse than when he went in because of the lack of rehabilitation offered at federal penitentiaries.

She partially blames the youth justice system for her son's crime.

"The system needs changes. The system, I believe, has failed me … If there was anything else I could have done, I would have done it."

Hood will decide Jan. 29 if the teen will be sentenced as an adult, and what sentence he will get.

Holidays **Tree style**



RYAN TAPLIN/METRO HALIFAX

Laurie Peters from the Wittenburg Nursery braves the rain to set up some custom-made Christmas trees in front of a Young Avenue home Thursday.

New rules make it cheap and easy to launch a civil court case in 2009

JENNIFER TAPLIN
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Always wanted to sue the pants off someone, but couldn't afford it?

Well, as of Jan. 1 it's going to be cheaper and easier to launch a civil court suit.

Lawyer John Keith was involved in rewriting the rules for civil court. He said it's been a work in progress for almost five years, but Nova Scotia is the first province to do it.

"The rules need to be updated to reflect a lot of the new realities that exist since they were originally developed in 1972, including the rise of computers and that most people store their information electronically," he said.

"The rules need to be updated ..."
Lawyer John Keith

A group of legal experts wanted to simplify and streamline the process since civil cases are taking much longer these days.

"Back in the '70s a long trial would be two or three weeks, and now it can be months and months."

Lawyers have also noticed there are more unrepresented litigants.

"If you don't have a legal aid certificate or if you're not a wealthy corporation, it's pretty difficult to afford the process as it stands right now."

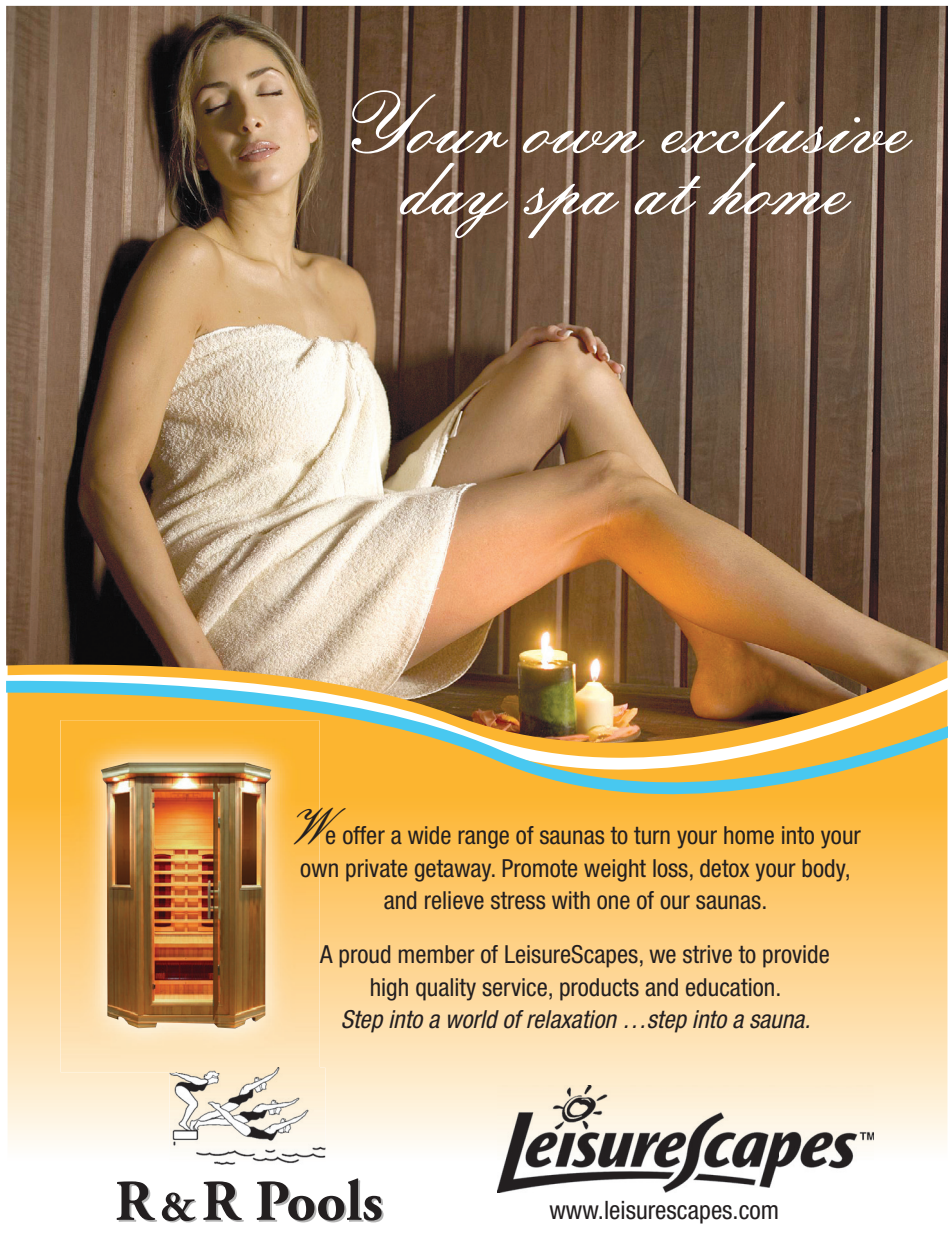
So, they rewrote the rules in plain-spoken language so someone doesn't need a law degree to understand the process. They simplified the procedures for claims under $100,000 and made it quicker to get to court.

The new rules will take effect Jan. 1.

"We hope that people will see their claims coming to court a lot quicker and at least be able to see a light at the end of the tunnel sooner," Keith said.

"We're hoping the process will become much less complicated and the courts will be much more inviting."

While Nova Scotia won the race to reform civil court rules, other provinces like Ontario and Alberta are now working on their own revisions.







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Construction, service positions take up job slack in Ontario, Quebec
StatsCan says between 2002 and 2007, Quebec and Ontario lost manufacturing jobs, but construction and service-sector jobs more than made up the difference, with higher employment and higher wages. **METRO HALIFAX**

Promises, doubts for economic update

PAUL MCLEOD
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Something's gotta give.

Premier Rodney MacDonald admits revenues have taken a hit and the news of a $2.4-billion pension shortfall is making things worse.

But he's promising as much as $100 million in infrastructure funding, all without running a deficit.

MacDonald hasn't talked of any specific cuts, but yesterday implied the government will clamp down in union negotiations.


Rodney MacDonald

"Times have changed. And when times change, it has to be reflected in collective agreements," said MacDonald.

"There has to be recognition on both sides of the table that these are unique and challenging times. At the end of the day, we're all going to have to play a roll in dealing with the fiscal pressures."

But the opposition is increasingly skeptical of MacDonald's promises, saying they're just platforms for an election. Liberal Leader Stephen McNeil said MacDonald has given up on making the minority government work and is positioning for a spring campaign.

"The economic update on Dec. 19 will be essentially made-up numbers."
NDP critic Graham Steele

Both opposition parties have repeatedly called on MacDonald to release an economic update. That's now coming on Dec. 19, but NDP critic Graham Steele says even that can't be trusted.

"Unfortunately, the economic update on Dec. 19 will be essentially made-up numbers. It is not audited or reviewed by independent people in any way," said Steele.

"If the premier says everything's going to be balanced then it'll be balanced. There's so many numbers they can play with the public's not going to see any real, audited, dependable numbers until after an election."

Review public private partnerships: Unions

PAUL MCLEOD
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As Nova Scotia moves to embrace more P3 projects, unions are warning the government could get fleeced.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees sent out a release Thursday calling for the auditor general to do an independent review on public private partnerships.

This comes as the provincial government plans a massive infrastructure surge next year that will include at least three new P3 projects.

"Greater independent oversight of the MacDonald government's contract to Partnerships BC to 'evaluate' P3 projects is needed," said CUPE Nova Scotia president Danny Cavanagh.

The government recently announced it was looking for advisers on potential projects. Transportation Minister Murray Scott said industry and the public would be involved.

"Greater independent oversight of the MacDonald government's contract to Partnerships BC to 'evaluate' P3 projects is needed."
CUPE N.S. president Danny Cavanagh

"I want to make sure we have a very transparent process," he said. "I won't be recommending anything to cabinet unless I'm 100 per cent sure it's the right thing to do both for taxpayers and for providing projects that are on time and on budget."

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Supreme Court denies Schreiber
The Supreme Court has ruled, in a decision without comment, that it would not review Karlheinz Schreiber's latest bid to block his extradition from Canada. Schreiber will not be extradited until he has participated in a public inquiry regarding his dealings with Brian Mulroney. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Canada



Christmas tree or holiday tree?

The first test for Quebec Premier Jean Charest came just days after winning Monday's election — what to call the tree erected on the lawn of the legislature. A Tuesday news release announced the premier would "light the Christmas tree" the next day, but was corrected to "holiday tree" within minutes. The province later said the second release was sent in error and that the tree is, in fact, a Christmas tree. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Government broke law on EI: Court

The federal government collected employment insurance premiums "unlawfully" for three years, the Supreme Court of Canada said in a decision that raises questions about what will happen to the money paid into government coffers by employers and employees during that time.

In a 7-0 judgment, the court rejected arguments by two Quebec unions that the former Liberal government under then-prime ministers Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin had deliberately racked up huge employment insurance surpluses and then diverted them to help balance the federal budget.

But the court found that EI premiums in 2002, 2003 and 2005 had been collected "unlawfully, without the necessary legislative authorization" from Parliament. That's because the federal cabinet was given the discretion to set the rates, without the criteria that had previously been used to guide those decisions.

Employment insurance was effectively transformed from a regulatory scheme into "a payroll tax," Justice Louise LeBel wrote for the unanimous court. Invoking "the ancient, but fundamental, principle of our democratic system that there should be no taxation without representation," he said it was not clear that Parliament had intended to delegate its taxing authority, making the collection of EI premiums in those years illegal. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Response

- "Canadian employers and employees can be confident that any future revenues raised from EI premiums will go exclusively towards paying benefits and reducing EI premiums," said a statement from the department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

British Columbia **Great gondola**



ANDY CLARK/REUTERS

A gondola lift carries skiers on the Peak 2 Peak pass between Whistler and Blackcomb mountains in Whistler, B.C., Thursday. At 3,024 metres, the Peak 2 Peak has four support towers and is the world's longest unsupported span. The gondola officially opens Friday.

News in brief

HEALTH A review of thousands of cases handled by Dr. Rajgopal Menon reinforced the magnitude of the errors in the disgraced pathologist's work, the New Brunswick legislature heard Thursday. CBC News Online reports Gamma-Dynacare Medical Laboratories re-examine roughly 23,000 tests conducted at the Miramichi Regional and Edmundston Regional Hospitals, finding 5,286 of the cases misdiagnosed.

DEPORTED Steven Andrews Hayes, 49, a U.S. fugitive sex offender has been ordered deported from Canada, after he was discovered working under an alias on a Calgary construction site. Hayes is wanted in Texas on charges of aggravated sexual assault of a child, CBC News Online reports. He was profiled on America's Most Wanted and had been on the run since 2005. METRO NEWS SERVICES



Family charged with being organized crime group
Eight members of the same family, arrested on drug and weapons charges following several police raids in southwestern New Brunswick, made brief court appearances in Moncton on Thursday and faced a total of 57 charges, including being members of an organized crime group. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Long road to recovery

JEFF HODSON
Metro Canada

The past 2½ years have been a "marathon of baby steps" for a Vancouver army reservist whose brain was split by an axe in a horrific attack in Afghanistan.

Capt. Trevor Greene said he's never been a patient man and the agonizing slowness of his progress has been the most difficult part of his recovery.

"It's like being frozen in an iceberg and slowly thawing out," said Greene, originally from Cape Breton, at a hotel in Vancouver on Thursday.

In March 2006, Greene, a journalist and author, was a co-operation officer in a platoon of Canadian soldiers operating near Kandahar.

During a meeting with village elders, a youth ran up behind Greene and plunged an axe deep into his skull. Greene had taken off his helmet and the axe cleaved his brain in half.


JEFF HODSON/METRO CANADA

Trevor Greene and fiancée Debbie Lepore shown outside their hotel in Vancouver on Thursday. Greene had his head split open during an axe attack while serving in Afghanistan. A documentary following the pair during Greene's recovery is set to air Friday and Saturday on CTV.

Greene's recovery is the subject of a documentary, Peace Warrior, which airs Saturday night (and repeats Sunday) on CTV.

The documentary, by North Vancouver's Sue Ridout, follows Greene, his fiancée Debbie Lepore and their three-year-old daughter Grace for 18 months as the family moves from an extended-care facility in B.C. to a brain injury centre in Alberta and finally to their new home in Nanaimo.

The pair plan to marry in July 2010.

"It'll be three years in March and we're looking good," said Lepore, who gave up her career as a chartered accountant to care for her fiancé.

"I'm very, very happy with what he has accomplished so far."

Greene, who is alert and has limited movement, said his goal is to walk and one-day hopes to accompany his daughter down the aisle at her wedding.

Airports infiltrated by crime groups: RCMP

REPORT There are 38 organized crime groups with members or associates working at Pearson International Airport in Toronto, according to an RCMP study of smuggling at Canadian airports.

The groups smuggle humans, cocaine, marijuana and a stimulant called "khat" that predates the use of coffee, but is relatively new on Canadian streets, according to the RCMP study, called Project Spawn. The study examined criminal cases between January 2005 and August 2007 in the airports of Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax.

1,326
The number of people working in Canadian airports that are believed to have links to organized crime groups.

"The facilities are susceptible to criminal exploitation and infiltration, particularly at the major international airports that receive frequent flights from either source countries or transit countries for various types of contraband," the report states.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

News in brief

ELEPHANTS Zoo elephants are living truncated lives, as little as one-third the lifespan of pachyderms in protected preserves, says a new study published in the journal Science. The study was co-authored by a top University of Guelph veterinarian in Ontario.

FEDERAL FRAUD A former federal civil servant has been sentenced to two years in prison for defrauding the federal government of $2.7 million. Alain Gagnon pleaded guilty to breach of trust and fraud over $5,000.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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10

New drug might help shrink breast tumours

The bone-strengthening drug Zometa may enhance the effects of chemotherapy, shrink breast tumours and help more women avoid a mastectomy, British researchers said. **REUTERS**

World

Suicide bomber kills 50 in Iraq

A suicide bomber killed about 50 people and wounded more than 100 on Thursday, including Kurdish and Arab officials, in a crowded restaurant near Iraq's ethnically mixed city of Kirkuk.

The bomber detonated explosives inside the restaurant, shattering the calm of a major Muslim holiday, and killing at least one official from Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, who was eating there with other politicians after a meeting to discuss Kurdish-Arab tensions.

Police said the restaurant north of Kirkuk, a city disputed by ethnic Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen, was packed during lunch hour. The cavernous restaurant's floor was left littered with broken glass and spotted with blood, and plates of food and soda cans were abandoned on tables.

Brig.-Gen. Sarhat Qader, a local police official, put the toll at 50 dead and 109 wounded. A U.S. military statement said 45 were killed and 93 wounded.

It appeared to be the worst attack in Iraq since 63 people were killed by a truck bomb in Baghdad on June 17.

Violence has dropped sharply in recent months after more than five years of sectarian bloodshed and insurgency unleashed by the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. Iraqis have begun to venture out and resume normal life in areas where security is returning, but militants still stage regular attacks in volatile areas. Kirkuk has been one of the less violent cities.

Suicide bombings are generally attributed to Sunni Islamist al-Qaida.

The blast, in a well-known restaurant frequented by Kirkuk dignitaries, shook Iraq as Muslims celebrated Eid al-Adha, a four-day religious holiday.

Many people are off work and would be more likely to visit restaurants. **REUTERS**



AKOO RASHEED/REUTERS

Iraqi policemen rush a child wounded in a bomb attack Thursday into a hospital in Kirkuk, 250 kilometres north of Baghdad. A suicide bomber killed about 50 people and wounded more than 100 yesterday in a crowded restaurant, police said.

U.S. troops

- Iraq will need a U.S. troop presence to help build up its military forces past the newly agreed to three-year deadline for the withdrawal of American soldiers, a senior Iraqi official said.

4,000 Greek students march in protest

VIOLENCE Protesters hurled fire bombs at riot police, who answered with teargas, as 4,000 Greek students marched on Thursday in a sixth straight day of anti-government violence.

Riots across Greece, triggered by the police shooting of a teenager but fuelled by deep popular anger over corruption and economic hardship, have shaken the conservative government.

"Down with the government of murderers," read demonstrators' banners. Marchers chanted "Cops, Pigs, Murderers!" in the latest spasm of Greece's worst unrest since the aftermath of its 1967-74 military rule.

Helicopters hovered overhead as the protesters set fire to piles of garbage in the middle of deserted Athens avenues.

The violence was less intense then it has been over the previous days, but more protests were planned for Friday and Monday and some Greeks asked how much longer the government could remain in power. **REUTERS**

Auto bailout falls apart in Senate

ECONOMY A $14-billion USemergency bailout for U.S. automakers collapsed in the U.S. Senate on Thursday night after the United Auto Workers refused to accede to Republican demands for swift wage cuts.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said he was disappointed about the demise of an emerging bipartisan deal to rescue Detroit's Big Three.

The Republicans had a closed-door meeting where they balked at giving the automakers federal aid unless their powerful union agreed to bring wages into line with those of Japanese carmakers. **REUTERS**

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Celebrated Russian artist called fascist by critics

Russia's top modern art award has gone to a collection of unashamedly patriotic works, but the artist was promptly jeered by hecklers who accused him of fascism. Alexey Belyayev-Gintovt won the main Kandinsky prize for a series of canvases titled Motherland-Daughter. REUTERS

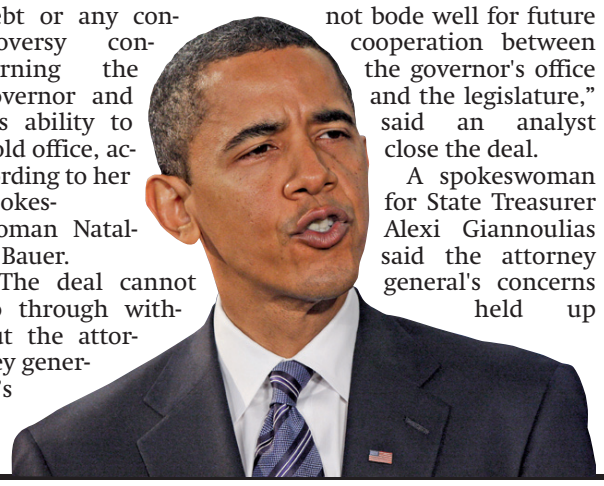
Seat scandal causing delays

Corruption charges filed against Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich forced the delay of a $1.4-billion US debt sale needed to keep the state's nursing homes open, state troopers' cars fueled and prisoners fed, state officials said Thursday.

Without money from the debt sale the state was facing a record unpaid bill backlog nearing $4 billion.

On Tuesday, the governor and his chief of staff John Harris were charged with corruption by federal prosecutors for trying to sell president-elect Barack Obama's U.S. senate seat.

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan said she was reviewing whether she can tell investors there is no pending or actual litigation that could affect the debt or any controversy concerning the governor and his ability to hold office, according to her spokeswoman Natalie Bauer.



The deal cannot go through without the attorney general's certification.

Blagojevich could face impeachment if he does not resign from office, a situation "we believe does not bode well for future cooperation between the governor's office and the legislature," said an analyst close the deal.

A spokeswoman for State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias said the attorney general's concerns held up the debt sale planned for Thursday. The competitive sale, which was postponed until Tuesday, had been generating good interest from potential bidders in the municipal bond market.

Meanwhile, the governor's office has not cited a specific reason for the note sale delay despite repeated requests by Reuters.

Obama has distanced himself from the corruption scandal but questions about his connections to the Illinois governor and some of his fundraisers have been raised in recent days.

Barack Obama REUTERS

Green groups pressuring Europe on climate action

RECESSION European leaders moved towards agreement on a multibillion-dollar program to tackle economic recession and a climate change plan amended to limit impact on struggling industries.

Green groups warned that the European Union's credibility as a force in tackling climate change would be endangered if it accepted too many changes to a plan to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 20 percent by 2020.

One British group said compromises in EU climate policy, which will be key to world talks next year to produce a successor to the Kyoto pact on climate change, amounted to a "meltdown."

REUTERS

News in brief

CRIME Bernard Madoff, a Wall Street trader who founded Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities, was arrested and charged on Thursday with allegedly running a multi-billion dollar Ponzi scheme, the U.S. said. REUTERS

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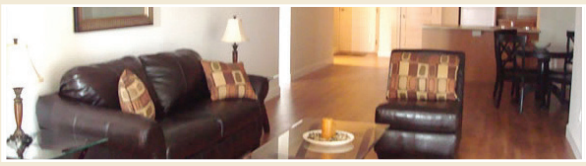
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Daschle to lead U.S. health reform
U.S. president-elect Barack Obama yesterday chose former senator Tom Daschle to spearhead health-care reform — putting a Washington veteran and one-time Senate Democratic leader in charge of one of the most ambitious and expensive gambles of his administration. REUTERS

High water **Rome hit by floods**



PAULO SIQUEIRA/REUTERS

A rescuer carries a stranded woman from a coffee bar in Rome on Thursday. The city's mayor asked authorities to declare a state of emergency after heavy rains caused flooding.

Venezuela indicts opposition leader on corruption charges

Venezuela indicted opposition leader Manuel Rosales on corruption charges, possibly weakening adversaries of leftist President Hugo Chavez as he seeks to deepen his self-styled revolution.

The indictment, which had been expected, came after the government this year blocked several opposition politicians from running for office, sparking criticism that Chavez was using the state to silence his political enemies.

The indictment opens the possibility that Rosales, who says the charges are trumped up, could be unable to run for president in the 2012 election. Chavez is opening a campaign for a constitutional amendment allowing him to stay in office after his current term ends.

"The only thing missing is for them to investigate me for the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy."
Manuel Rosales

"Today we've come to confront this political lynching that they are trying to do, a terrorist trial, a political trial," said Rosales, a former presidential candidate who last month was elected mayor of Maracaibo, Venezuela's second-biggest city. "The only thing missing is for them to investigate me for the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy," Rosales told a news conference. The charges of "illicit enrichment" are punishable by three to 10 years in prison. REUTERS

Murder suspect channels Hamlet

JUSTICE U.S. exchange student Amanda Knox, perhaps the best-known murder suspect in Italy, is featured in a prison movie reciting the "To be, or not to be" speech from Shakespeare's Hamlet, the director said. Knox, 21, is being held over the murder of her British roommate.

Brazil unveils $3.6B tax breaks

ECONOMY Brazil's government announced tax breaks worth $3.6 billion US designed to help boost demand and stem a slowing economy, but which could undermine its fiscal strength. REUTERS

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Tip of the Day: Motivation is everything. You can do the work of two people, but you can't be two people. Instead, you have to inspire the next guy down the line and get him to inspire his people.
– Lido Anthony Lee Lacocca

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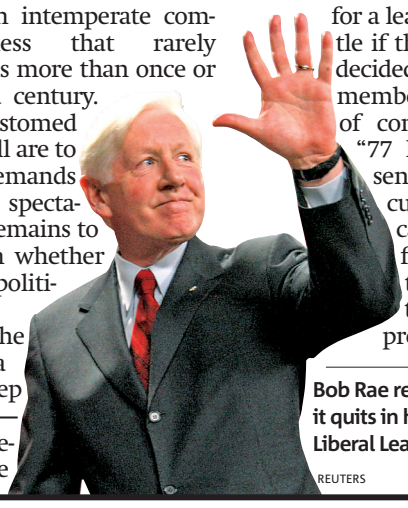
We can only imagine what was said to Bob Rae in the 24-hour period between last Monday and Tuesday to convince him to concede the fight for leader of the Liberal Party of Canada to his old college roommate Michael Ignatieff. Whatever it was, it must have been a compelling enough argument — or attractive enough offer — to breach Rae's apparently adamant opposition and forthright ego.

When the week began, Rae was insisting that "most people believe it's better to have a contest, it's better to have a choice." A day later, he was all resignation and curt practicality: "It's not the end of the world here, folks," he told the Toronto Star. "I mean, a decision had to be made."

"You have to be realistic about these things," he said, with the verbal equivalent of a wince. "It's just politics."

Politics is what we're seeing a lot of this season, as the howling rhetoric and convulsions of two election campaigns on either side of the border seems to have infused the customary torpor of Canadian Parliament with an intemperate combativeness that rarely emerges more than once or twice a century.

Unaccustomed as we all are to the demands of this spectacle, it remains to be seen whether our politicians have the stamina to keep going — or whether the Canadian people have the patience to pay attention.



Bob Rae recently called it quits in his bid for the Liberal Leadership.

REUTERS

Call it what you want — and I like to call it a coup within an attempted coup — but it's hard to deny that the surprisingly brisk leadership shuffle the Liberals have undertaken this week is an acknowledgement that their assault on Stephen Harper's minority government might not be powered by fully charged batteries. Even after stepping aside for Ignatieff, Rae insisted that he would still have been up for a leadership battle if the party had decided to go to its members, instead of consulting the "77 MPs and 58 senators of caucus, defeated candidates from the October election and the presidents of riding associations and commission clubs" the Star called the "Liberal elite."

Consulting the party's own bylaws, choosing alternative delegates from electoral district associations requires a candidate "(i) is a youth, if there are not six youth delegates from that EDA; (ii) is an aboriginal person, if there are not two aboriginal delegates from that EDA; (iii) is a woman, if there are not 10 delegates from that EDA who are women; (iv) is a man, if there are not ten delegates from that EDA who are men; (v) is a senior, if there are not two delegates from that EDA who are seniors." You almost can't blame them for defaulting to the backroom everyone thinks runs the Liberal party.

Rae's right; whatever this is — and it's certainly nothing like democracy, perish the thought — it's just politics, God help us all.

Rick McGinnis writes about music, movies, books and television, but not opera.



MICHAEL DE ADDER

Views

A little accountability worth council's time

UrbanCompass



Paul McLeod

A lot of people think regional council is a joke because they spend too much time debating cats and chickens. That's unfair.

There are much, much better reasons to think council is a joke.

Here's a pop quiz: A council meeting is cancelled and the next week the agenda is swamped with items. Do you:

A) Spend half an hour talking about how you don't have enough time to talk about stuff. Or;

B) Not do that.

If you answered B) then you just don't get democracy.

Council solved this problem by passing a motion to meet next week ... unless they decide they don't need to meet next week. I wish I was kidding.

It's easy to make fun of council for these things, but there was a much more troubling vote Tuesday. For the second meeting in a row, council members rejected having their votes recorded.

Currently votes are done by verbal "ayes" and "nayes." There's no record of the final tally or who voted which way. Want to know which councillors voted for a certain idea? You can't.

Councillors can always call for a recorded vote, and this often happens if it's close. But you or I don't have that power, so if they don't bother, then you're out of luck.

A group of councillors (for the record, Younger, Hendsbee, Dalrymple, Nicoll, McCluskey, Karsten, Wile, Sloane, Uteck, Watts, Hum and Johns) tried to have all votes recorded and tie names to votes. It died in a tie (opposed were Streatch, Barkhouse, Smith, Blumenthal, Walker, Mosher, Adams, Harvey, Outhit, Rankin, Lund and Mayor Kelly).

"It puts us on too much of a mechanical path. It takes away the discretion and the authority of the chair," said Coun. Steve Streatch.

Uh, discretion? In counting votes? Is it just me or isn't that the opposite of what we want?

Not to be outdone, Coun. Tim Outhit said having the media report on the numbers for or against something would just make council look divided. Apparently, citizens' right to know is trumped by council's right to look good.

To be fair, these guys aren't trying to be secretive. They say optional recorded votes is good enough. Always doing it, they say, would just slow things down.

Fair enough.

But council isn't exactly the paragon of time management.

Is it really worth sacrificing a ton of accountability for 10 or 15 minutes per day?

Paul McLeod is a staff reporter at Metro Halifax. He is currently in rehab for being a political junkie. It's going badly.

Letters

Canadian politics needs more women in the game

Recent letters have expressed a sense of pride that more women are becoming involved in Canadian political discussions. As a young, female, recent political-science undergraduate, I would like to suggest maybe it is not that female Canadians are uninterested in politics, but maybe those who are interested do not feel they are offered a fair chance to contribute.

I believe senior level Canadian government roles are mainly held by male employees. Just as the boys would dominate the field in gym class, I feel men have dominated the House. If you gave us more of a chance to hold the ball, maybe we could have more of a chance to score.

AMINI KHANNA, NORTH YORK, ONT.

Measure twice, cut once

RE: "Let's retire the queen" (Dec 10)

Why it's bad to have one more step before a final decision? "Measure twice, cut once" as say Canadians. What a mess we would have with this fast-made coalition if not for the intervention of the GG. Now we have a reasonable cooling period for Harper to think twice how to behave in a minority, and for the opposition to choose the new stronger leader.

BORIS FOURSENKO, RICHMOND HILL, ONT.

Deeply opposed to columnist's statements

RE: View — "How the coalition propelled Harper in polls" by Ezra Levant (Dec 9)

"Polls showing that Canadians deeply oppose the coalition …" "Harper has skyrocketed to his highest level of supporters yet …" Wait a second, have I missed something? I remember Canada was deeply divided about the coalition. And by my understanding, Harper was not too popular in the Maritimes, Quebec and Ontario last week.

I am saddened to find such a right-wing column in my Metro (Mr. Levant is a Conservative party activist) and I find it only has a place in the paper if the paper offers the same space to a different view.

MELANY GAUVIN, OTTAWA

It's your turn to tell others what you think. E-mail your thoughts and opinions to: halifaxletters@metronews.ca
Letters must include sender's full name, address and phone number – street name and phone numbers will NOT be published. We reserve the right to edit letters.

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You can't buy irony
Visa Inc. chief executive Joseph Saunders was without his plastic yesterday after losing his wallet en route to New York from San Francisco. REUTERS

Business

EDITOR: FERMIN DESOUZA, FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA

BCE, buyers say $34.8B deal dead

The $34.8-billion leveraged buyout of BCE Inc. ended in collapse Thursday, setting the stage for a fight between the company and its buyers over the deal's $1.2-billion breakup fee.

The derailment was widely expected after BCE's accountants, KPMG, had concluded that the company would be insolvency due to its debt load.

The purchase required a positive solvency ruling from KPMG as a condition for closing, which was slated for Thursday. KPMG did not deliver a positive opinion, leading the deal to fail.

BCE confirmed the buyout would not proceed and said it would demand a breakup fee from the buyers, because they prematurely delivered their notice to terminate.

The buyers, meanwhile, said it was "very clear" that neither party owes a termination fee to the other.

REUTERS

Oil firms to cut spending in 2009

ENERGY EnCana Corp. and Petro-Canada moved to cut 2009 capital spending yesterday to cope with falling commodity prices and market turmoil, but they left themselves enough room to change plans quickly in case the economy improves, or worsens.

Petro-Canada said it will cut its 2009 capital budget by 36 per cent, to $3.96 billion, from the $6.16 billion it plans to spend this year, with a cut in production of about 15,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day.

EnCana will cut its spending next year by 18 per cent to about $6.1 billion US, down from $7.4 billion this year, as it looks to keep its production flat with 2008 levels.

REUTERS

Business in brief

RETAIL Lululemon Athletica Co. and Empire Co. both showed double-digit quarterly profit growth, but while the markets warmed to Empire, owner of Sobey's grocery stores, and its essential food products, reaction to the trendy clothier was negative as consumer spending slows.

REUTERS

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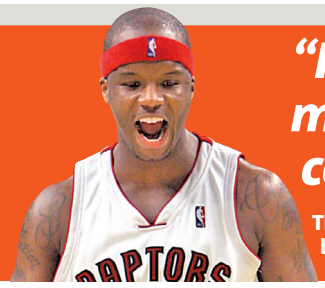
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Junior selection camp opens

Thirty-eight players arrived in Ottawa yesterday for Canada's world junior hockey selection camp. A morning skate and an evening intrasquad game are scheduled for Friday and Saturday, but just an intrasquad game is on Sunday's agenda. The 22-player team will be named Monday. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Sports



"I really didn't feel wanted from a management standpoint ... There were comments made behind the scenes."

The Raptors' Jermaine O'Neal, speaking to the Indianapolis Star regarding his former boss, Indiana Pacers president Larry Bird. METRO NEWS SERVICES

SPORTS@METRONEWS.CA

Sports in brief

NHL The NHL future of New Glasgow's Jon Sim is in doubt after the New York Islanders placed him on waivers earlier this week. Teams had until noon Thursday to claim the 31-year-old forward, but he cleared waivers. According to Newsday, the move effectively makes Sim the 24th man on a 23-man roster.

MLB Matt Clement has agreed to a minor-league deal with the Toronto Blue Jays, MLB.com reported Thursday. A team official said nothing was official yet, although an announcement could come Friday. The right-hander hasn't pitched in the major leagues since 2006.

MLB The New York Mets acquired relief pitcher J.J. Putz from the Seattle Mariners in a three-team trade that also involved the Cleveland Indians. The deal came only hours after the Mets officially signed former Angels reliever Francisco Rodriguez, who set the major league record with 62 saves in 2008. It is believed Putz will serve as the set-up man in a bullpen that will feature an entirely new look in 2009.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Bolts stun Habs

NHL RESULTS

Tampa 3 Montreal 1

Martin St. Louis scored twice and Tampa Bay stopped its nine-game losing streak with a 3-1 win over the Montreal Canadiens.

Vincent Lecavalier also lit the lamp and had an assist for the Lightning, who received two helpers from Lukas Krajicek to win their first game since Nov. 21 against Nashville. Olaf Kolzig stopped 31 shots, including all 24 he faced over the final two periods, for Tampa Bay.



SHAUN BEST/REUTERS

Vincent Lecavalier celebrates his goal with Mark Recchi, left, last night. The Tampa Bay Lightning beat Montreal 3-1.

Patrice Brisebois scored on the power play in the first period for the Canadiens, who had won four of their last five coming into Thursday night. Jaroslav Halak made 19 saves in defeat.

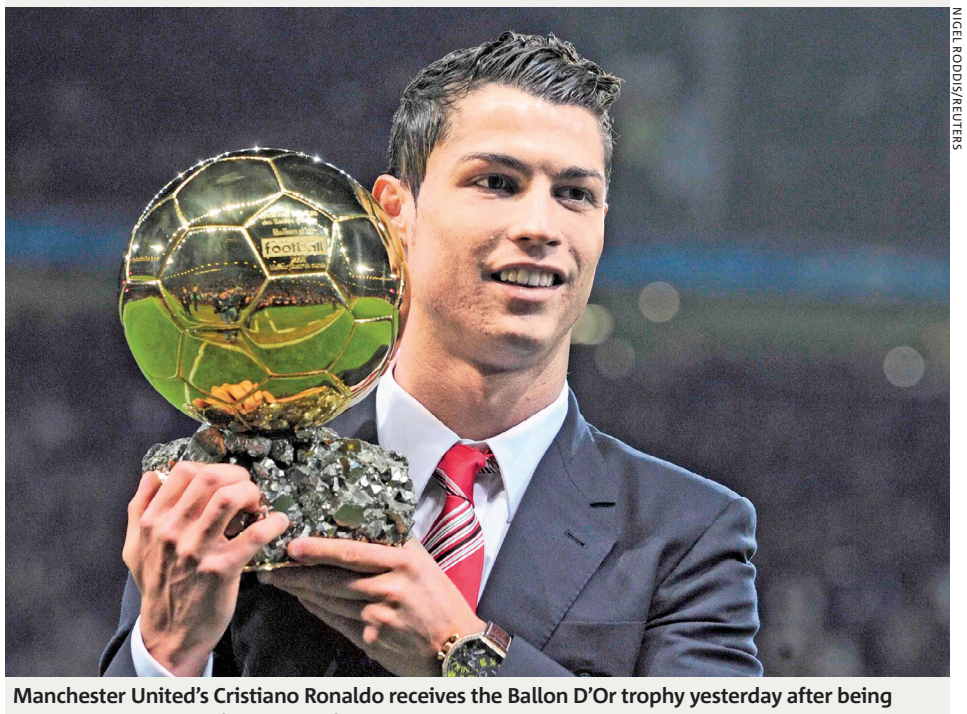
Penguins 9, Islanders 2

Petr Sykora and Pascal Dupuis both recorded their first career hat tricks as the Pittsburgh Penguins pummelled the New York Islanders 9-2 at Mellon Arena.

Cole Harbour's Sidney Crosby collected three assists as the Penguins snapped a three-game losing streak.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Ronaldo **European footballer of the year**



NIGEL RODDIS/REUTERS

Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo receives the Ballon D'Or trophy yesterday after being named the European footballer of the year. Ronaldo scored 42 goals in United's Premier League and Champions League winning season.

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Knotek named player of month

The Halifax Mooseheads have named Tomas Knotek player of the month for November. The 18-year-old forward collected eight goals and nine assists for 17 points in 13 games, and leads the team in scoring with 23 points overall. METRO HALIFAX

Fading crowds don't faze Herd

Mooseheads still No. 2 in attendance despite steep drop-off

MATTHEW WUEST
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RYAN TAPLIN/METRO HALIFAX



Despite the empty orange seats at Metro Centre this season, Mooseheads owner Bobby Smith isn't pushing the panic button.

The Halifax Mooseheads have been seeing a lot of orange lately, but ownership isn't pushing the panic button.

In Moose Country, orange is the colour of empty seats at the 10,595-seat Metro Centre, and the numbers are damning so far this season.

The average paid attendance through 17 games is lower than any full-season average in 12 years. The Herd has also drawn nine of the bottom 10 single-game crowds on record.

Mooseheads owner Bobby Smith said the decline is "about what you'd expect" for a rebuilding team with 10 wins in 34 games, particularly when you consider the fact that last season's squad was a star-heavy, veteran contender.

He also stressed the number of ticket giveaways have been chopped by about 500 per night since he bought the team in 2003, which skews comparisons to the past.

"We're down a few (overall) and we're down a few giveaways," Smith said. "I'm not concerned about it."

Smith said the presence of more non-weekend games has been a factor, and added that there is typically an increase in attendance in the second half of the season.

But even per-game crowds through 17 contests have not been this low in any season on record. Since 2003, crowds at this stage of the season are down almost 900 per night, including 2003-04, when Halifax was also a cellar-dweller.

Smith doesn't pin the drop on the economic downturn, nor does he buy the notion that the Mooseheads are experiencing a backlash from fans who were turned off after last year's championship charge ended in a thud in the semifinals.

"That team was built to win last year and didn't win," Smith said. "And even if we did win last year, I think our attendance would be down this year."

It's important not to lose sight of the fact that the Mooseheads still rank No. 2 in the QMJHL in attendance, trailing only the Quebec Remparts. Nobody else is even close.

As for improving attendance in the second half?

"Wins are the main thing," Smith said. "Last year, fans came out a lot more to see the team than they (are) this year with a (10-22-2) record. There's no secret to it."

More online

- For more detailed attendance analysis, visit Matthew Wuest's Q Files blog at www.metronews.ca/qfiles

Rookie Corbiel to start against Moncton

GOALIE Rookie goalie Mathieu Corbeil is getting a chance to strut his stuff in the absence of injured veteran Mark Yetman.

The 17-year-old is expected to make his third straight start for the Halifax Mooseheads tomorrow against the Moncton Wildcats at the Metro Centre as Yetman rests a groin injury.

Corbeil, whose statistics took a hit the past two games with 10 pucks getting past him on 56 shots, is considered the team's goalie of the future. The 6-foot-6 native of Montreal has a 3-6 record with a 4.17 goals-against average this season.

"Overall, Corbeil's had a very good start," Mooseheads head coach Cam Russell said. "He hasn't played a whole lot of hockey, but we've been happy with his efforts so far."

Russell said despite 10 goals allowed in two games, Corbeil has continued to progress in Yetman's absence and said this stretch "is a great learning experience for him."

Yetman's injury isn't expected to be serious.

Saturday marks Halifax's last home game until Dec. 30. The Mooseheads are 10-22-2, last in the Atlantic Division. The Wildcats (23-2-4) are first in the division.

MATTHEW WUEST/METRO HALIFAX



Mooseheads goaltender Mathieu Corbeil

Vanier gets a road trip — to Laval, not SMU

MATTHEW WUEST
matthew.wuest@metronews.ca

Saint Mary's University will have to wait two more years for another crack at hosting the Vanier Cup.

Canadian Interuniversity Sport announced yesterday that the University of Laval, based in Quebec City, would host football's national championship in 2009 and 2010.

Saint Mary's had entered a three-year bid for the event, which has only been held outside of Ontario once.

"When the board looked at all the bids on the table, Laval carried the day," said CIS chief executive officer Marg McGregor. "What was particularly attractive was taking the Vanier on a road trip to a part of the country that is crazy about university sport and particularly university football."

The Rouge et Or have won four of the past six Vaniers and have led the nation in attendance with average crowds of 14,044, including 32 straight standing-room-only sellouts. Laval will add 3,000 temporary seats for the event.

Saint Mary's hasn't given up on hosting the Vanier, and will explore options for adding permanent seats.

"Congratulations to Laval," said Saint Mary's spokesman Chuck Bridges. "They've got an exciting venue for university football. We wish them well and anticipate in 2011, 2012 and 2013, we'll be right back in the bidding process."

Saint Mary's bid

- The Saint Mary's bid was to host the game at Huskies Stadium, which fits about 4,000 fans. The university planned to bring in temporary seating, as it did for a CFL exhibition game in 2005, to boost the capacity to the 12,000 range.



Visit metronews.ca/movies to get showtimes, watch trailers and read reviews.

Movies&Entertainment

EDITOR: TINA COSTANZA, TINA.COSTANZA@METRONEWS.CA

Movies

Just golden

Pg 20



The Curious Case of Benjamin Button — starring Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett — Frost/Nixon and Doubt led the Golden Globe nominations with five nods each. All the buzz around The Dark Knight fell flat, as the blockbuster only picked up one nomination.

movies

Pg 20



Sean Penn delivers an utterly truthful performance in Milk.

music

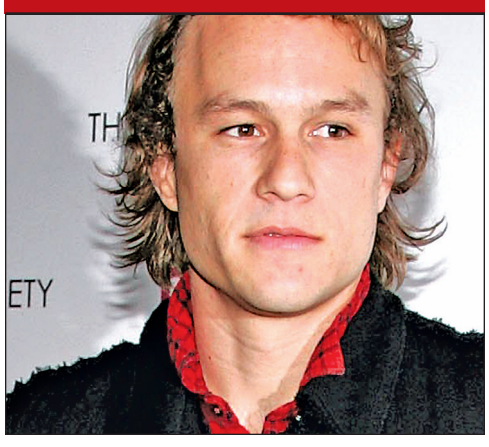
Pg 25



So what's on Alan Cross' Christmas music playlist?

7th heaven

Pg 28



Heath Ledger picking up award nominations.



Tokyo Mater to play ahead of Bolt

Disney-Pixar will premiere its 3-D short film Tokyo Mater at theaters nationwide before its animated movie Bolt. The short is the fourth in Disney-Pixar's Cars Toons series, inspired by the hit 2006 film Cars. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Movies

A CLASSIC; EXCELLENT; GOOD; FAIR; POOR

And the nominees are ...

Benjamin Button and Frost/Nixon lead the Golden Globes pack

A variety of films from heart-rending Slumdog Millionaire to tension-filled Frost/Nixon shared the spotlight of Golden Globe nominations yesterday as Hollywood marched toward the Oscars.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, about a man who ages backward, and Frost/Nixon, which recounts the interviews of disgraced U.S. president Richard Nixon by British journalist David Frost, each earned five nominations including best film drama to lead the nominees.

"It's a really good morning," Frost/Nixon director Ron Howard told Reuters. "We need this kind of acknowledgment to cut through the clutter" of numerous holiday films.

Benjamin Button and Frost/Nixon were joined in the race for best drama by Slumdog Millionaire, about a poor Indian man competing for love and money on a TV game show, and relationship sagas Revolutionary Road and The Reader.

Doubt, a tale of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, tied Benjamin Button and Frost/Nixon with five nominations, but was shut out of the race for best film drama.

Also excluded from best film races were Milk, with Sean Penn playing slain gay rights activist Harvey Milk, and Batman flick The Dark Knight. Milk did, however, earn a nomination for Penn as best actor and Dark Knight provided a nomination for the late Heath Ledger in the supporting actor category.

Golden Globe Awards are also are handed out for best film musical or comedy. That group of nominees included Burn After Reading, Happy-Go-Lucky, In Bruges, Mamma Mia! and director Woody Allen's Vicky Cristina Barcelona.

The Golden Globes are voted on by roughly 90 members of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association and given out on Jan. 11.

REUTERS

GoldenGlobes

THE NOMINEES: For a complete list of Golden Globe nominees, vist metronews.ca/entertainment.



The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, starring Brad Pitt, received five Golden Globe nominations yesterday.

Milk a good source of film

Milk

Director: Gus Van Sant
Stars: Sean Penn, Josh Brolin
Classification: 14A
Rating: ½

PHIL BROWN
for Metro Canada

REVIEW Gus Van Sant's Milk is a project the director has been nurturing for years.

The movie is about Harvey Milk, the first openly gay politician elected in the U.S. who was tragically murdered by his colleague Dan White.

Sean Penn stars as Milk and delivers the kind of emotionally draining and utterly truthful performance that is expected of him. The same can be said of Josh Brolin, who gives the potentially one-dimensional Dan White a thoroughly believable and complex psychological profile — which shouldn't be particularly surprising given that he just did the same thing with the far more challenging role of George W. Bush.

While Penn and Brolin are the major standouts, everyone else in the cast — including James Franco, Emile Hirsch and Alison Pill — seem to understand the socio-cultural importance of the film and deliver excellent performances.

Released mere weeks after the now infamous Prop 8 campaign in California, this film about arguably the greatest gay rights activist could not be more timely. It's obviously a very personal issue for Van Sant, who treats the film with the kind of gravitas it deserves and avoids his typical stylistic flights of fancy unless they serve the film in a meaningful way.

Milk might not test the boundaries of narrative filmmaking like the rest of Van Sant's recent work, but it is still an important story told with style and heart that deserves to be seen.



Sean Penn in Milk

GoldenGlobes

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JEREMY HOTZ

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Atlantis Rising being adapted
Writer-director Joby Harold is negotiating to write the adaptation of the comic book Atlantis Rising for DreamWorks. Len Wiseman (Live Free or Die Hard) is attached to direct the apocalyptic science fiction project. REUTERS

Reel Time

A CLASSIC; EXCELLENT; GOOD; FAIR; POOR

As the world doesn't turn

The Day the Earth Stood Still

Director: Scott Derrickson
Stars: Keanu Reeves, Jennifer Connelly
Classification: PG
Rating:

TALIA SOGHOMONIAN
Metro World News

Back in 1951, the thought of aliens invading the Earth was flippant. The world was still recovering from the Second World War, the Cold War had set in and extraterrestrials were the new Germans.

Robert Wise's now-classic movie The Day the Earth Stood Still carried a timely anti-nuclear message, attempting to stretch the reigning fears of the time; the Cold War was setting in and the Korean War was just around the corner.

Almost 60 years later, in Scott Derrickson's remake, the global situation has changed, this time with an ecological message, the latest point of inspiration for screenwriters being global warming. From the latest Bond flick Quantum of Solace to The Transporter 3, raising awareness of the "unconventional truth" has been like a light bulb of a bright new idea.

But while Wise's original was an unconventional exercise, Derrickson's version seems clueless, reprising a "city under siege" story with in blockbuster format and some very bland characters.

Jennifer Connelly plays Helen, a microbiologist who is rounded up by the government one night, along with some fellow eggheads, when a giant space object seems headed straight to earth. Instead, it lands in Central Park and it turns out to be a glowing giant marble.

Out of it steps out a human-shaped alien who later morphs into Klaatu (Keanu Reeves), accompanied by an equally cold towering cold metal robot who seems lifted directly from Metropolis.


Keanu Reeves stars in the updated version of this sci-fi film.

On the web
- Visit metronews.ca/movies to see trailers for both Delgo and The Day the Earth Stood Still.

Klaatu is actually there to warn humanity that it's time to go, given that we're destroying the planet and the universe needs the planet to sustain life. But why warn us that they're going to destroy us?

The Day the Earth Stood Still is only about half the film it could have been. But its cowardly treatment of the political issue at its centre kills it. We don't expect every blockbuster to carry a serious message, but the movie had the potential of Independence Day and instead turns out to be just a one-time distraction.

Delgo better left in bargain bin

Delgo

Director: Marc F. Alder, Jason Maurer
Stars: Freddie Prinze Jr., Jennifer Love Hewitt
Classification: PG
Rating:

PHIL BROWN
for Metro Canada

REVIEW Sometimes I wonder if the people who make family films hate children. Sure, there are plenty of children's movies that are wonderful, but for the most part they rank amongst the most boring, clichéd, unfunny movies ever spat onto the screen.

It's as if family filmmakers are convinced that their core audience is so young and stupid that they'll watch anything. Case in point: Delgo, an almost incomprehensible film that will be filling clearance bins very soon. This CGI-animated movie is about a mythical land ruled by flying people, reptilian people, goblins, and non-speaking monsters (they all have actual names, but they are difficult-to-remember nonsense words).

Because of a former evil queen, there is a long-brooding feud between the flying people and the reptilian people which leads to a war that can only be stopped by a plucky reptile boy and an impossibly perfect flying princess, who-falls in love and help unite the fighting creatures. It's all pretty clichéd fantasy storytelling that could have been salvaged by clever writing, impressive animation, or entertaining celebrity voice casting, but sadly the film boasts none of the above.

Delgo was directed and co-written by Marc F. Alder and Jason Maurer. They had never made a film before, and it shows. As with all CGI movies the cast is stacked with recognizable names, all of whom were wasted. Freddie Prinze Jr. and Jennifer Love Hewitt voice the lead characters, while the likes of Malcolm McDowell and Eric Idle phone in supporting roles.

Garbage like Delgo should be filling landfills where it belongs.





Ruffalo drops out of film project

Mark Ruffalo, who's brother died tragically this month, has dropped out of the indie drama Greenburg, according to the Hollywood Reporter. He will likely be replaced by Ben Stiller in the film. **PEOPLE.COM**

Quote **of the week**

"I find Benjamin is about those universal things we all share — that 95 per cent that makes us all the same, wherever we are in the world. Our loves, our hopes, but also the loss that we all walk around with and hide very well, and the ultimate notion that we're all expendable. To me, it's a counter-statement to this divisive period we've been in, where we focused on the two, three, four, five per cent of ways in which we're different."



BRAD PITT TALKING ABOUT THE POSITIVE MESSAGE IN HIS NEW FILM, THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON — IN THEATRES CHRISTMAS DAY.

ROLLING STONE

Messing minority in new comedy

Debra Messing sticks out like a sore thumb in her latest movie, Nothing Like the Holidays. But that is just fine by her.

In the comedy, which debuts in theaters today, a Puerto Rican family comes together at Christmas for the first time in three years, and Messing plays a very non-Latina career-driven executive wife of the family's eldest brother, played by John Leguizamo.

"I'd never been an outsider in a film," Messing said. "I very much felt like the white Jewish girl and it was the first time I had ever been the minority on the set."

Messing tried to "access my inner Latina" by recalling her elementary school Spanish during the shoot, she said.

The 40-year-old Messing said the film marks a step forward in Hollywood because it is essentially a mainstream holiday film but one that focuses on a minority, Latino family.

Nothing Like the Holidays follows the Rodriguez family during a holiday gathering in Chicago that is prompted by the youngest brother's return from combat overseas.

An ensemble piece, the movie details the trials of each family member's career or personal relationships. Messing's character, Sarah, for instance, struggles with whether to take a new, high-powered job while facing pressure from her husband and mother-in-law to start a family.

"That's not specific to the Puerto Rican culture," Messing said of the themes the movie pursues. "I could see an Italian family on screen, I could see a Jewish family on screen. You could just fill in the blank, because family is family."

Messing, who shot to stardom on eight seasons of the NBC sitcom Will & Grace, said she hoped Nothing Like the Holidays would help break down cultural barriers in Hollywood in much the same way Will & Grace brought gay characters to mainstream TV audiences in a hit prime-time show.

REUTERS



Debra Messing stars in Nothing Like the Holidays.

Movie **feature**

On the web

- To read a review of Nothing Like the Holidays, and to see a trailer of the film, visit metronews.ca/movies.



Yes-we-can message of new Jim Carrey film

STEVE GOW
for Metro Canada

FEATURE Bradley Cooper will never forget the night Barack Obama won the Presidency. He was in a hospital watching the elated event unfold on a battered television while shooting a movie appropriately enough called The Hangover.

Recently in Toronto to publicize his latest film, the former star of TV's Alias had been pondering the shifting winds of America.

"We've become more isolationist as a society but I think that's definitely changing. You can feel it, especially with the President-elect, there's a whole new energy (in America)," he said.

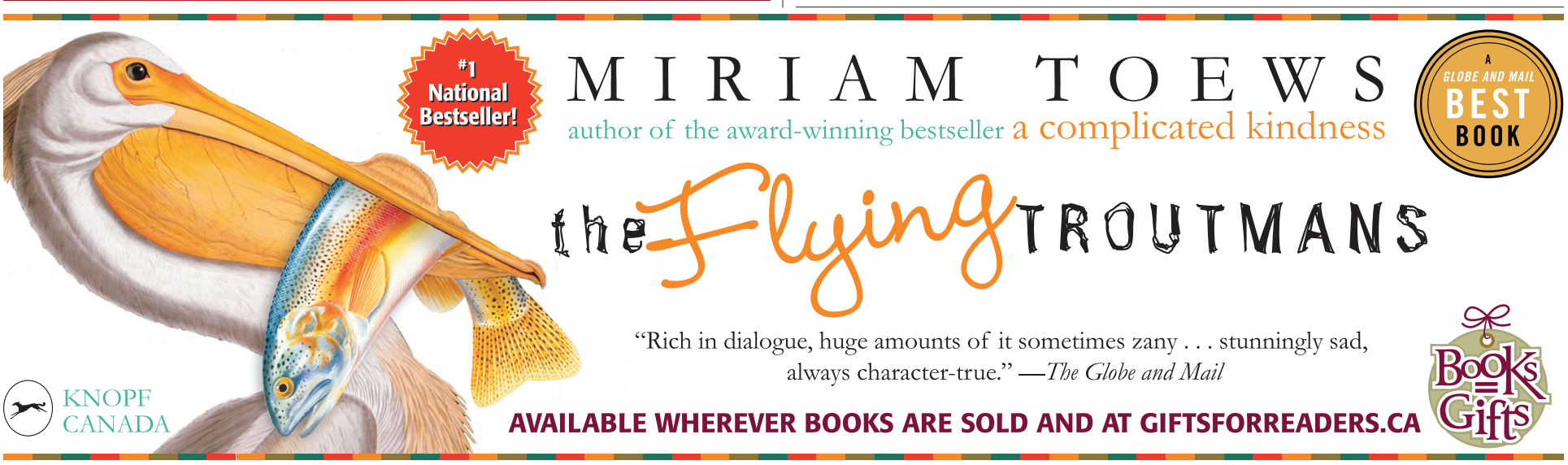
This new outlook couldn't be better signified than with the release of Jim Carrey's comedy Yes Man. A life-affirming tale about a slacker who's life has been stalled by complacency, Yes Man explores the journey he undergoes after agreeing to say "yes" to everything — whether it be guitar lessons, learning to speak Korean or to some brawler asking him if he wants a punch in the mouth.

"I didn't realize how much (the message of the film) was going to affect me," admits Cooper who plays Carrey's best friend in the movie. "When I read the script I just thought 'what a cool hook — this guy's got to say yes to everything.'"

"(And) it's so relevant. We've been watching a guy (Obama) with the mantra 'Yes We Can' behind him for two years … its really interesting, the timing with everything."

The comedy may mark a turn in Jim Carrey's mindset as well. After attempting to show fans a more serious side in last year's box-office fumbler The Number 23, Yes Man brings Carrey back to the form that once made him Hollywood's most popular funnyman.

"The reason why I wanted to do it was Jim," said Cooper. "Watching him work in close proximity is kind of amazing."



Lewis to get an Oscar
Jerry Lewis finally is getting some respect from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, whose board of governors has voted to honour him with a special Oscar for his humanitarian work. REUTERS

Movie **morsels**

Australia

REVIEW Australia is a beautifully filmed study of a vast land that — as one character says — has "a strange power." What director Baz Luhrmann should fret over is the drawn-out narrative that plays to melodramatic excess. Set during the outbreak of World War II, Australia features Nicole Kidman as Lady Ashley, widow of a mysteriously murdered cattle ranch owner. When confronted by her husband's rival with a takeover bid, Ashley hires a maverick stockman (Hugh Jackman) and joins him on a massive cattle drive across the outback.
Steve Gow/for Metro Canada

Bolt

REVIEW Essentially, this tale about the unyielding loyalty of canines is as charming and heart-tugging as any Disney movie out there. Even better, the film excels in skill, depth and maturity equaling that of Wall-E and Ratatouille. Not really surprising since Pixar's brilliant chief John Lasseter is now running Disney's animation department as well.
Steve Gow/for Metro Canada

Four Christmases

REVIEW Vince Vaughn and Reese Witherspoon star as a professional couple who always avoid their families during the holidays. After the film's worst plot contrivance traps them in the country and broadcasts their availability to their kin, the couple — Vince-Vaughn and Reese Witherspoon — embark on their dreaded four Christmases. Sure, this is no future Christmas classic, but it will be a movie that you won't angrily turn off when it starts airing on television.
Phil Brown/for Metro Canada

Quantum of Solace

REVIEW The movie starts literally minutes after its predecessor, Casino Royale, ended, with a pre-credit car chase that sums up director Marc Forster's brisk approach to the story. Action scenes are the meat of Bond movies. Most of what we see in Quantum of Solace is at least as good as the standards set in previous films; relentless, and more than a bit improbable. Daniel Craig's JamesBond is still an excellent incarnation of the character.
Rick McGinnis/Metro Canada

Twilight

REVIEW Kristin Stewart stars as Bella, a young girl who moves to a small town and becomes instantly captivated by a classmate named Edward (Robert Pattinson) who is part of a very peculiar and insular family known as the Cullens. As Bella becomes more attracted to Edward, she discovers that the Cullens are a clan of vampires … but very safe emo-vampires who only drink animal blood and spend of most of their time silently emoting and looking pretty rather than preying on helpless victims. Thus begins an epic tale of forbidden love that has made the hearts of millions of teenage girls swoon.
Phil Brown/for Metro Canada

Academy Awards' no nunsense films

InFocus



If Meryl Streep earns an Academy Award for her performance as the formidable Sister Aloysius Beauvier, a nun who confronts a priest after suspecting him of abusing an African American student in Doubt, she will join a short but prestigious list of actresses who have won gold playing nuns.

The first to win an Oscar for portraying a sister was Jennifer Jones in 1943's The Song of Bernadette; next Susan Sarandon won for playing Sister Helen Prejean in Dead Man Walking.

Nuns have a long cinematic history and everyone from Ingrid Bergman to Mary Tyler Moore to Eric Idle has donned a habit for dramatic effect.

Nuns have flown, sung and even been shipwrecked with Robert Mitchum on a Pacific Island, but my favorite big screen nun is Sister Assumpta in The Dangerous Lives of Alter Boys.

The title sounds ripped from the headlines, but is actually taken from a 1994 novel by Chris Fuhrman.

Set in the early 1970s, the film revolves around a group of teenage boys obsessed with comic books.

Their ringleader, Tim, played by Kieran Culkin, is a prankster who schemes to get revenge on Sister Assumpta, a joyless strict nun with a prosthetic leg played by Jodie Foster.

Learning most of what they know of the world from the superhero adventures written by Stan Lee, they believe there are only two types of people — heroes and villains.

Sister Assumpta falls into the latter category and becomes the subject of a "blasphemous" comic book drawn by the boys featuring the evil motorcycle driving Nunzilla.

The guys imagine themselves as the heroes who do battle with Nunzilla's sisterly minions. Once the comic book is discovered the boys are expelled from school assured by Sister Assumpta that not only are they not welcome at school anymore, they likely won't be welcome in Heaven either.

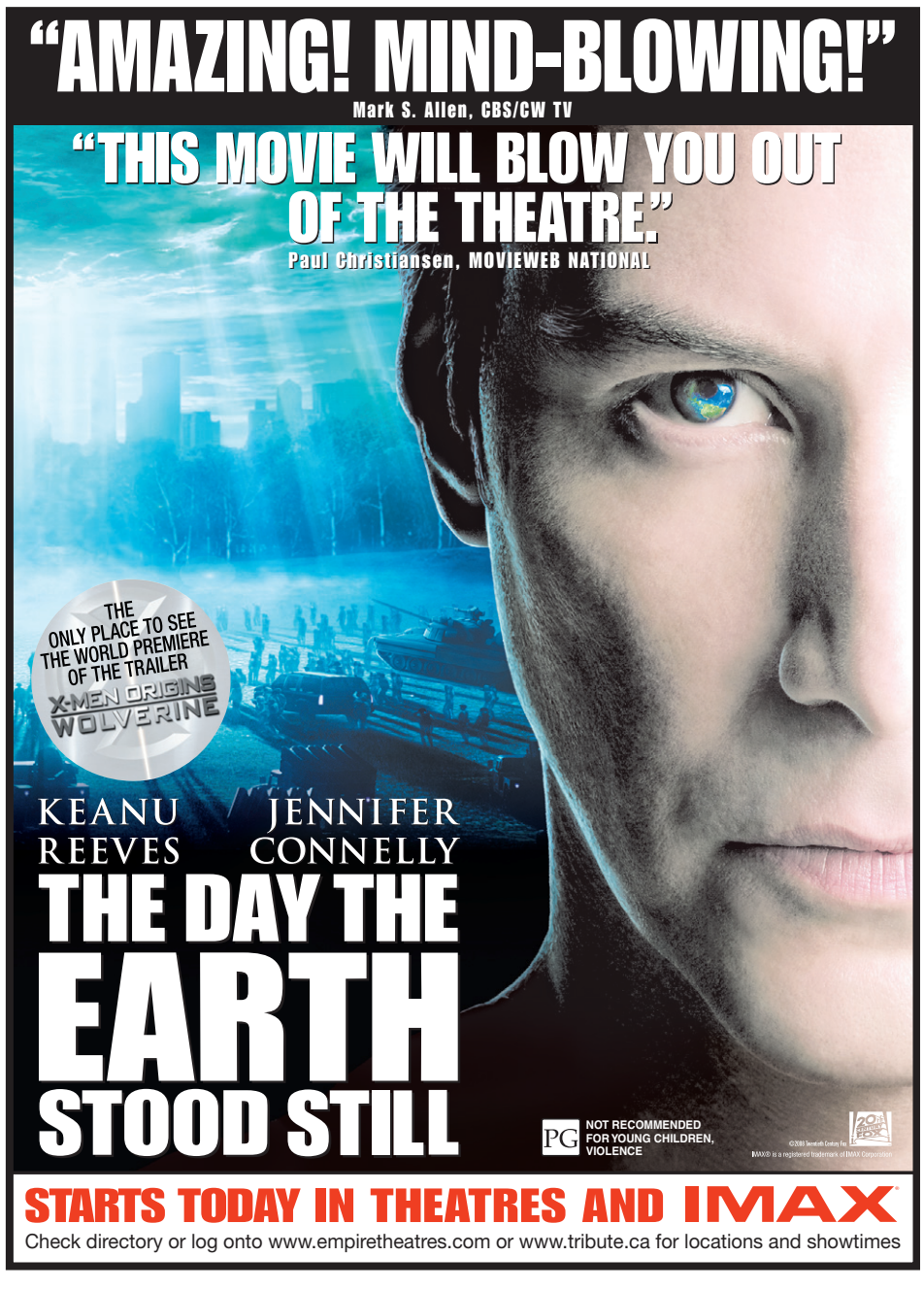
Foster's Sister Assumpta spits hellfire in every sentence. She plays the sister as a strict disciplinarian who truly believes she is doing the best to save her students from damnation. Her peg leg is just a physical manifestation of her rigid personality. It's something different for Foster who pulls it off with aplomb.

For more adventurous viewers there are nunsploitation movies. Sometimes called Convent Erotica, these movies are not for the easily offended and have titles like Killer Nun and Behind the Convent Walls.

Watch them, but don't forget to say ten Hail Marys afterwards.

Richard Crouse is the author of Son of the 100 Best Movies You've Never Seen and film critic for CTV's Canada AM.





Screen Times

This week's new releases are highlighted in red.

THESE PAGES COVER MOVIE START TIMES FROM FRI., DEC. 12 TO THURS., DEC. 18. TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.



DISNEY ENTERPRISES

Bolt, from left, Mittens and Rhino shown in a scene from the animated film Bolt, which is currently in theatres.

HALIFAX

BAYERS LAKE

190 Chain Lake Dr., Bayers Lake
902-876-4800

Australia (PG) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 12:30-1-4:30-5-8:30-8:55
Bolt (G) Dolby Stereo Fri-Thu 1-3:30-7-9:20
Changeling (14) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 9:45
The Day the Earth Stood Still (PG) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 12:45-1:25-3:35-4:05-7-7:15-9:45-10
The Day the Earth Stood Still: The IMAX Experience (PG) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 1-3:40-6:45-9:30
Four Christmases (PG) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 12:50-1:30-3:10-4-6:40-7:10-9:10-9:25
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa (G) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 1:30-4-7:30-9:40
Nothing Like the Holidays (PG) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 1-4-7-9:45
Punisher: War Zone (18) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 1:25-4:25-7:20-9:55
Quantum of Solace (14) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Tue 12:45-1:15-3:30-3:50-6:45-7:15-9:30-10 Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Wed 12:45-1:15-3:30-3:50-6:45-9:30-10 Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Thu 12:45-1:15-3:30-3:50-6:45-7:15-9:30-10
Role Models (14) Dolby Stereo Fri-Thu 1:10-3:40-7:15-9:45
Transporter 3 (14) Dolby Stereo Fri-Tue 1:20-4:10-6:50-9:15 Dolby Stereo Wed 1:20-4:10-9:15 Dolby Stereo Thu 1:20-4:10-6:50-9:15
Twilight (PG) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Sat 12:40-1:05-3:40-4:05-6:45-6:50-9:30-9:40 Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Sun 12:40-1:05-3:40-4:05-6:45-9:30 Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Mon-Tue 12:40-1:05-3:40-4:05-6:45-6:50-9:30-9:40 Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Wed-Thu 12:40-1:05-3:40-4:05-6:45-9:30-9:40
WWE: Armageddon (STC) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Sun 9



IMAX

190 Chain Lake Dr., Bayers Lake
902-876-4800

The Day the Earth Stood Still: The IMAX Experience (PG) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 1-3:40-6:45-9:30

OXFORD THEATRE

6408 Quinpool Rd.
902-423-7488

Synecdoche, New York (STC) Fri 6:30-9:15 Sat 2-6:30-9:15 Sun 4-6:45-9:30 Mon-Thu 6:30-9:15

PARK LANE

5657 Spring Garden Rd.
902-423-4860

Australia (PG) Stadium Seating Fri-Sun 12:30-4-7:30 Stadium Seating Mon-Thu 4-7:30
The Day the Earth Stood Still (PG) No Passes, Stadium Seating Fri-Sun 1:20-4:10-6:50-9:40 No Passes, Stadium Seating Mon-Thu 4:10-6:50-9:40
Four Christmases (PG) Stadium Seating Fri-Sun 12:50-3:30-6:40-9:20 Stadium Seating Mon-Thu 3:30-6:40-9:20
Milk (14) Stadium Seating Fri-Sun 12:20-1-3:20-3:50-6:30-7-9:30-9:55 Stadium Seating Mon-Thu 3:20-3:50-6:30-7-9:30-9:55
The Nutcracker Ballet (STC) Stadium Seating Sat 1
Quantum of Solace (14) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Sun 1:30-4:20-7:15-9:50 Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Mon-Thu 4:20-7:15-9:50
Role Models (14) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 9:15

LOWER SACKVILLE

LOWER SACKVILLE

760 Sackville Dr.,
Downsview Plaza
902-869-2022

Australia (PG) Fri-Thu 8:30
Bolt (G) Fri 7-9:15 Sat-Sun 12:45-3:15-7-9:15 Mon-Thu 7-9:15
The Day the Earth Stood Still (PG) No Passes Fri 7-9:30 No Passes Sat-Sun 12:30-3-7-9:30 No Passes Mon-Thu 7-9:30
Four Christmases (PG) Fri 6:45-9 Sat-Sun 1:15-3:45-6:45-9 Mon-Thu 6:45-9
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa (G) Fri 6:30-8:50 Sat-Sun 1-3:15-6:30-8:50 Mon-Thu 6:30-8:50
Quantum of Solace (14) Fri 7:10-9:40 Sat-Sun 1:10-3:50-7:10-9:40 Mon-Thu 7:10-9:40
Twilight (PG) Fri 6:50-9:25 Sat-Sun 12:50-3:40-6:50-9:25 Mon-Thu 6:50-9:25

DARTMOUTH

DARTMOUTH

650 Portland St., 902-434-4200

Australia (PG) Fri 7:30 Sat-Sun 1:45-7:30 Mon-Thu 7:30
The Boy in the Striped Pajamas (PG) Fri 6:45-8:55 Sat-Sun 2:10-6:45-8:55 Mon-Thu 6:45-8:55
Four Christmases (PG) Fri 6:50-9:05 Sat-Sun 2:20-6:50-9:05 Mon-Thu 6:50-9:05
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa (G) Sat-Sun 2:30
Transporter 3 (14) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri 1:10-3:40-6:45 Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Sat 6:45 Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Sun 1:10-3:40-6:45 Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Mon 6:45 Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Tue-Thu 3:40-6:45
Twilight (PG) Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Fri-Sun 12:40-3:25-6:20-9:10 Dolby Stereo, Stadium Seating Mon-Thu 3:25-6:20-9:10
Quantum of Solace (14) Fri 6:35-9 Sat-Sun 2:05-6:35-9 Mon-Thu 6:35-9
Transporter 3 (14) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 6:40-9
Twilight (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital Fri 6:30-9:05 Dolby Stereo Digital Sat-Sun 2-6:30-9:05 Dolby Stereo Digital Mon-Thu 6:30-9:05

DARTMOUTH CROSSING

145 Shubie Dr., 902-481-3251

Australia (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 12:30-4-7:30
Bolt (G) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 2-4:30-7:25-9:45
Bolt in Disney Digital 3D (G) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 1-3:40-7:05-9:20
The Day the Earth Stood Still (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating, No Passes Fri-Thu 12:45-1:30-3:30-4:30-6:45-7-9:25-9:40
Delgo (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 12:55-3:25-6:30
Four Christmases (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 1:50-4:15-7:15-9:45
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa (G) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Tue 12:50-3:45-7-9:15 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Wed 12:50-3:45-9:15 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Thu 12:50-3:45-7-9:15
Punisher: War Zone (18) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Sat 12:35-3:15-6:45-9:30 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Sun 12:35-3:15 Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Mon-Thu 12:35-3:15-6:45-9:30
Quantum of Solace (14) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 1:45-4:20-7:10-9:50
Transporter 3 (14) Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 12:40-3:35-6:35-9:35
Twilight (PG) Dolby Stereo Digital, Stadium Seating Fri-Thu 1:15-4:05-7:05-9:15-9:55

The bestselling albums at Amazon.ca
1. And Winter Came, Enya; **2.** Priests, The Priests; **3.** A Winter Symphony, Sarah Brightman; **4.** A Midwinter Night's Dream, Loreena McKennitt; **5.** Day And Age, The Killers. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Music

Fresh takes on Christmas jingles

SoundCheck



Alan Cross
alan@ongoinghistory.com

The way I see it, there are three types of people when it comes to the music of the holidays. There are those who love every single note of Christmas cheer. Then there are those who grind their teeth to the roots every time they're assaulted with yet another rendition of The Little Drummer Boy. And there's a third group — people like me who like new and unusual seasonal songs.

Some pathological urge demands that I collect non-traditional Christmas music. Here's a sample of what you'll hear in my house this holiday season.

• **White Christmas, Stiff Little Fingers:** If we must hear this song, the default version is from Belfast's best punk rock band. Available on Punk Rock Christmas (Rhino).

• **Run, Rudolph, Run, Lemmy and friends:** Lemmy (he of Motorhead and the interesting facial growths) teams up with Dave Grohl (Foo Fighters) and Billy Gibbons (ZZ Top) to offer a new guttural version of a secular classic. The album from which it comes also features contributions from Tony Iommi (Black Sabbath) and Alice Cooper. Available on We Wish You a Metal Xmas and a Headbanging New Year (Armoury Records).

• **Sometimes You Have to Work on Christmas (Sometimes), Harvey Danger:** Poignant tribute to those who don't get the day off. Especially meaningful to those who work in movie theatres. Available on: 20th Century Masters: The Millennium Collection (Universal)

• **A Christmas Duel, The Hives** featuring **Cyndi Lauper:** A Christmas song that starts with the line "I bought no gifts this year/And I slept with your sister" is guaranteed to attract attention. And what's Cyndi Lauper doing here? Available free at the *hivesbroadcastingservice.com*.

• **Someday at Christmas, Jack Johnson:** Just the kind of carol you'd expect from a mellow surfer dude from Hawaii. Available on Brushfire Holidays, Vol. 1: This Warm December (Brushfire).

• **Dad Threw Up on Christmas Day, Arrogant Worms:** Happy, big-band arrangement from Canadian comedy group. Not for the squeamish. Available on Christmas Turkey (Arrogant Worms indie label).

• **Stop Giving Me Crap for Christmas, Bobby Gaylor:** Standup comedian and former Roseanne writer expresses some universal frustrations. I don't remember where I found this. I think it was one of those errant MP3s that end up in my inbox from time to time.

• **Did I Make You Cry on Christmas? (Well, You Deserved It!), Sufjan Stevens:** Prolific indie songwriter approaches the holiday season with a certain, er, honesty. Available on: Songs for Christmas, Vol. 4: Joy! (Asthmatic Kitty).

The Ongoing History of New Music can be heard on stations across Canada. Read more at ongoinghistory.com and exploremusic.com.



Jack Johnson
GETTY IMAGES

Halifax artists top East Coast nomination list

KAMIA CREELMAN
for Metro Canada

Halifax got a big nod from the East Coast Music Association yesterday.

With more than 15 artists nabbing more than 25 East Coast Music Award nominations, Nova Scotia's capital will be well-represented at the 2009 ECMA in Corner Brook next February.

Matt Mays & El Torpedo is Halifax's frontrunner with five nominations, only matched by Cape Breton's Gordie Sampson. Both are up for recording of the year. Gordie Sampson is up for male solo recording and Matt Mays & El Torpedo for group recording of the year.

Halifax transplant Jill Barber and Newfoundland's Hey Rosetta! got four nominations each, and are also up for the recording of the year award.

Indie folk songstress Christina Martin grabbed three nominations, and Chad Hatcher, Dave Carroll and Mir each grabbed two. The Joel Plaskett Emergency, a long-time Halifax favourite, also boasts two nods.

Sixteen other artists have multiple nominees including Hot Toddy, Matt Anderson and Damhnait Doyle, whose Lights Down Low album finishes out the recording of the year category.

The nominees "truly reflect the vibrant musical diversity among East Coast artists, from well-established and popular bands and musicians to fresh new faces and sounds," Wade Pinhorn, chair of the East Coast Music Association, said in a press release yesterday.





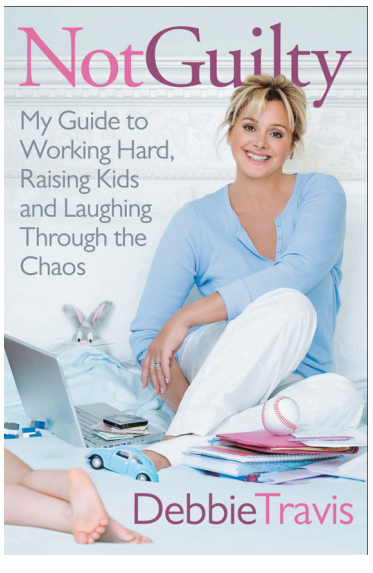
Above: Matt Mays & El Torpedo. Right, inset: Jill Barber.

The 2009 ECMA Festival will be held at the end of February in Corner Brook, N.L.

Sale on Dec. 15th - Dec. 20th
30% off all in stock BLACK&DECKER
20% off all in stock DEWALT DELTA MACHINERY PORTER+CABLE
DEWALT PORTER+CABLE DELTA MACHINERY FACTORY SERVICE INDUSTRIAL POWER TOOL REPAIR
453-5090
BURNSIDE INDUSTRIAL PARK, 100 ILSLEY AVENUE

WIN a chance to see John Gracie at the Schooner Showroom
You and 9 friends could win tickets to the show, as well as a collection of John Gracie's Christmas CD's. To enter, send an e-mail to **susan.whitty@metronews.ca.**
Enjoy the holiday stylings of John Gracie, Dec. 20th at 8pm.
Contest closes Dec. 17, 2008 at noon. One entry per person. Winner will be contacted via email. Must be at 19+.
metro Do it daily.





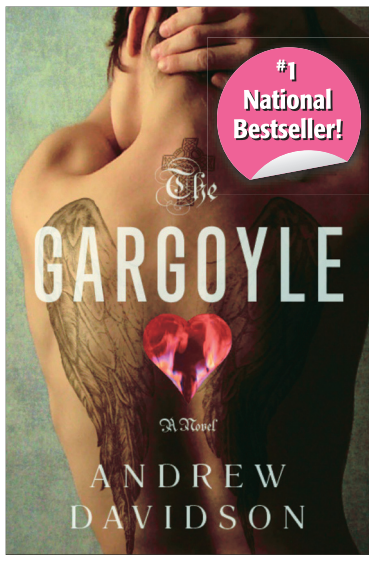
This Christmas, is TRUTH stranger than FICTION?

"Treat your kids like a paint job. It's all in the preparation. Take the time to sand and prime well and the results will be as good as perfect. Don't worry too much about the cracks or blotches – they just add character." —Debbie Travis

Books=Gifts

"I dare you to read this without flinching. It's as engrossing as it is gruesome, the kind of horror you watch with one eye closed." —*The Washington Post*

AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD AND AT GIFTSFORREADERS.CA





This Day In Music History — 2001

Dave Grohl and Krist Novoselic file a countersuit against Courtney Love. The case involves the release of Nirvana material. The suit is in response to an action Love filed earlier that claims Nirvana's contract with Universal Music is void. REUTERS

Music

Bon Jovi top touring act

Bon Jovi was the top touring act in 2008, just ahead of Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band, according to sales data collected by Billboard.

Bon Jovi's Lost Highway trek through North America and Europe grossed $210.6 million US. Springsteen's Magic tour pulled in $204.5 million. The survey covers the period Nov. 14, 2007, through Nov. 11, 2008. Rounding out Billboard Boxscor's Top 10 were Madonna, with $162 million for the still-underway Sticky & Sweet tour, the Police which earned $150 million on the second leg of their reunion tour, Celine Dion who took in $91 million and Kenny Chesney with $86 million).

Others on the list were Neil Diamond who earned $81.2 million, the Spice Girls who netted $70 million, the Eagles with $56.6 million and Rascal Flatts ($55.8 million). REUTERS

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Mischa getting ugly?
Former The O.C. star Mischa Barton looks set to be returning to TV screens — the actress is reportedly in talks to join the cast of Ugly Betty. **IMDB.COM**



Television

What's Oprah's weight got to do with it?

IntelleVision



SOMETIMES AN ÉCLAIR IS JUST AN ÉCLAIR: There's a theory making the rounds that the current economic downturn is a good thing in disguise — that being shocked out of the complacent habits of prosperity and the social status quo is the ultimate form of "creative destruction," burning away out-of-date ideas and habits and forcing us to look at the world in a whole new way.

Sometimes, however, it's just an invitation for increasingly tenuous and absurd lunges at social diagnosis, such as a piece in Tina Brown's Daily Beast current affairs web magazine this week by writer and comic Jessi Klein. The subject at hand is Oprah Winfrey's recent weight gain, the subject of an apparently anguished confession in the recent issue of Winfrey's O magazine, which Klein sees as a physical reflection of the subprime mortgage meltdown and credit crunch behind our current economic insecurity.

It's hard to compare the extra time Oprah might have spent at the snack table backstage with defaulted mortgages.

"Oprah concludes that her latest chub-battle has led her to adjust her weight objective," Klein writes. "She's no longer striving to be thin, she says, but simply to balance health with giving herself 'the love and care' she needs. So 2009 finds Oprah and the rest of the country adjusting to a new resolve. None of us, no matter what the size of our wallets, can be perfect. But when we waver from our budgets, we'll be downsizing our indulgences. For Oprah, that might mean a cookie instead of a whole cake; for the rest of us, perhaps a movie instead of an Escalade."

It's at times like this that the tantalizing lure of metaphor — for writers especially — looks like epistemological crack, cheap, addictive and damaging. Oprah's weight gain is to be understood as one woman's caloric interpretation of social insecurity seeking solace in materialism; it's a sophomoric equation at best, one best discarded with undergrad English Lit essays.

It's hard to compare the extra time Oprah might have spent at the snack table backstage with credit card debt and defaulted mortgages; Oprah paid for the food she's eaten, after all, and her decision to supersize herself by 40 pounds wasn't facilitated by governments and banks underwriting fatty foods, and won't end in seizure and public auction of her waistline.

Klein seems to think that the cure for our widespread economic bingeing should be the prohibition of Escalades and "cashmere-iPoddy things that should have been off limits," and quotes Oprah's assessment that her overindulgence was "a love issue." Whatever imprudence might have motivated so much bad debt, love probably had less to do with it than woeful incomprehension of the concept of interest and the seriousness of the due date at the top of a bill.

Rick McGinnis writes about music, movies, books and television, but not opera.

FRIDAY

HA	H	D	B		7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime 12/12/08	31	31	31	ABC	News (N)	ABC Wld News	Inside Edition	Chronicle	Wife Swap (N)		Supernanny (N)		20/20
	7	7	7	ASN	The Road to Avonlea		Instant Star	TMZ (N)	Wife Swap (N)		Don't Forget the Lyrics!		Atlantis
	11	11	11	CBC	Coronation St.	Jeopardy! (N)	Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town		Doctor Who		CBC News: The National		The Hour
	32	32	32	CBS	News (N)	Evening News	The Insider (N)	Entertainment	Frosty	Frosty Returns	*The Flight Before Christmas*		NUMB3RS
	6	6	6	CIHF	Entertainment	ET Canada	Fascinating People of 2008		NUMB3RS "Power"		Life "Canyon Flowers"		News (N)
	9	9	9	CJCH	etalk	Hollywood	Law & Order		The Rankin Family Reunion (N)		Supernanny (N)		News (N)
	36	36	36	FOX	Deal-No Deal	The Simpsons	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Smarter Than a 5th Grader?		Don't Forget the Lyrics!		Fox First
	12	12	12	NBC	News (N)	NBC News	Hollywood	Extra (N)	Songs of the Season		Lipstick Jungle (N)		Dateline NBC
sports	55	55	55	SCOR	Hockey Talk	Game On	World Cup of Poker		WWE SmackDown!				Score Tonight
	53	53	53	TSN	Off the Record	SportsCentre	That's Hockey!	NBA Basketball Toronto Raptors at New Jersey Nets. (HDTV) (Live)					SportsCentre
cable variety	16	16	16	A&E	Cold Case Files		CSI: Miami (HDTV)		CSI: Miami "Grand Prix"		CSI: Miami (HDTV)		CSI: Miami
	70	70	70	APTN	News		Mixed Blessing	First Nation	Rabbit Fall	The Rez	*Shadow of the Hawk* ★★ (1976, Adventure)		
	37	37	37	BRVO	Street Legal		Desperate Housewives		Bravo! Fact	Books-Film	*The Last September* ★★ (1999, Drama)		
	49	49	49	COM	Laughs	Comedy Now	Air Farce	Good Morning	Corner Gas	Rick Mercer	The Simpsons	South Park	Comedy Inc.
	18	18	18	CNN	(5) The Situation Room		Lou Dobbs Tonight		Campbell Brown: No Bias		Larry King Live		Cooper 360
	38	38	38	DISC	How It's Made	How It's Made	Daily Planet (N)		Greensburg (N)		Man vs. Wild (N)		Interrogation
	34	48	48	HGTV	Holmes on Homes		House Hunters	Property Virgin	House Hunters	Extreme Home	Build a New Life		Relocation
	46	46	46	HIST	Ultimate Engineering		NCIS "Honor Code"		Shockwave		Ultimate Engineering		Ax Men
	17	17	17	MM	Gossip Girl (HDTV)		So You Think You Can Dance Canada				*Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle* (2003)		
	206	206	206	PIX	(6:45) *Scream of Stone* (1991, Drama)			*Avenging Warriors* (1990, Drama)			*Cop Land* ★★★ (1997, Crime Drama)		
	39	39	39	SHOW	EastEnders	Little Britain	The Best Years (DVS)		The Guard "Waheguru"		Testees	Kenny-Spenny	Webdreams
	40	40	40	SLICE	X-Weighted "Naomi"		Crash Test Mommy (N)		In Laws	Nearly Dead	Wedding SOS	Wedding SOS	Hair Challenge
	21	21	21	TLC	What Not to Wear		Real Simple. Real Life "Tracy"		What Not to Wear		What Not to Wear (N)		Say Yes-Dress
	22	22	22	W	Shopping Bags	Style by Jury	Will & Grace	Friends	Shopping Bags	Shopping Bags	*The Road to Christmas* (2006, Comedy)		
	27	27	27	YTV	The Mighty B!	iCarly	*Home Alone* ★★★ (1990, Comedy) Macaulay Culkin.				Smallville "Siren"		Dark Oracle

SATURDAY

HA	H	D	B		7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime 12/13/08	31	31	31	ABC	News (N)	Wrld News Sat	Patriots All-Access		Funniest Home Videos		*Surviving Christmas* ★ (2004, Comedy)		
	7	7	7	ASN	*Anne of Green Gables* ★★★ (1985, Drama) Megan Follows, Colleen Dewhurst, Richard Farnsworth. Premiere.								The 902
	11	11	11	CBC	Sat. Report	Hockey Night	NHL Hockey Washington Capitals at Montreal Canadiens. (HDTV) (Live)						NHL Hockey
	32	32	32	CBS	News (N)	CBS News	Paid Program	Paid Program	Eleventh Hour "Cardiac"		48 Hours-Boot Camp		48 Hr. Mystery
	6	6	6	CIHF	Billy Graham Special (N)		Doc Nancy is mugged.		Painkiller Jane		Kenny-Spenny	Kenny-Spenny	News (N)
	9	9	9	CJCH	W-FIVE-Peace Warrior		*Last Exit* (2006, Suspense) Kathleen Robertson. (DVS)				Law & Order: SVU		News (N)
	36	36	36	FOX	Friends	Friends	KODAK Printer	Paid Program	Cops (N)	Cops	America's Most Wanted		Fox First
	12	12	12	NBC	News (N)	NBC News	Access Hollywood (N)		*It's a Wonderful Life* ★★★★ (1946, Comedy-Drama) James Stewart.				
sports	55	55	55	SCOR	Score Update	Footy Show	BodogFight		Strikeforce		Score on NFL	Footy Show	Score Update
	53	53	53	TSN	SportsCentre		E:60 (N)		Boxing (HDTV)				SportsCentre
cable variety	16	16	16	A&E	Secret Life of a Serial Killer		CSI: Miami "Identity"		CSI: Miami "Whacked"		CSI: Miami "10-7"		The Sopranos
	70	70	70	APTN	Tribal Treks	Music Speaks	MYTV	The Mix	Rez Bluez		*Gangs of New York* (2002, Historical Drama)		
	37	37	37	BRVO	Arts & Minds	Bravo!Videos	Christmas at the Concert Hall		Quartet Plus Four at Christmas		Trans-Siberian Orchestra		Christmas
	49	49	49	COM	Laughs	Comics!	Just for Laughs		Corner Gas	Blue Collar TV	The Simpsons	South Park	Colbert Cmas
	18	18	18	CNN	This Week in Politics		Lou Dobbs This Week (HDTV)		Special Investigations		Larry King Live		D.L. Hughley
	38	38	38	DISC	How It's Made	How It's Made	Destroyed	Destroyed	Mighty Ships "Maersk"		Canada's Worst Driver		Criss Angel
	34	48	48	HGTV	Holmes on Homes Attic.		Colin & Justin's Home Heist		Sarah's House	Mansions	Million Dollar Listing		Extreme-Home
	46	46	46	HIST	Captain Cook: Obsession		NCIS "Kill Ari"		Ancestors	Ancestors	*The Sentinel* ★★ (2006, Suspense)		
	17	17	17	MM	You Can Dance		*Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle* ★★ (2003, Action)				50 Cent: Money and Power		Dance
	206	206	206	PIX	*Every Which Way but Loose*		*Any Which Way You Can* ★★ (1980, Comedy)				*Lucky Numbers* ★ (2000, Comedy)		
	39	39	39	SHOW	TBA	Trailer Park	About a Girl	Kink in Hair	*Recipe for a Perfect Christmas* (2005, Romance-Comedy)				*The Descent*
	40	40	40	SLICE	Beautiful	Mr. Friday	Last 10	10 Pounds	Party Mamas	Party Mamas	Inside Hollywood		Housewives
	21	21	21	TLC	Jon & Kate Plus 8		Little People	Little People	Crazy Christmas Lights		Property Ladder (HDTV)		Trading
	22	22	22	W	Shopping Bags	Confidential	*How to Marry a Billionaire: A Christmas Tale* (2000)				*Christmas With the Kranks* (2004, Comedy)		
	27	27	27	YTV	Charlie Brown	Yogi's Caper	A Flintstones Christmas Carol			He-Man, She-Ra Christmas		Invader Zim	Ren & Stimpy

SUNDAY

HA	H	D	B		7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime 12/14/08	31	31	31	ABC	News (N)	ABC News	Funniest Home Videos		*The Santa Clause 2* ★★ (2002, Comedy) Tim Allen.				Housewives
	7	7	7	ASN	Young Blades		Funniest Home Videos		Gossip Girl (HDTV)		*Deck the Halls* (2005), Steve Bacic (DVS)		
	11	11	11	CBC	Red-Nosed Reindeer		*The Polar Express* ★★★ (2004, Fantasy), Nona Gaye				CBC News: Sunday Night (N)		fifth estate
	32	32	32	CBS	NFL Football		60 Minutes		Survivor: Gabon (HDTV) (Season Finale) (N)				Survivor Gab
	6	6	6	CIHF	16:9 Picture	The Simpsons	Family Guy	Family Guy	Survivor: Gabon (HDTV) (Season Finale) (N)				Survivor Gab
	9	9	9	CJCH	*Anne of Green Gables: A New Beginning* (2008, Drama) Shirley MacLaine. (DVS)						CSI: NY		News (N)
	36	36	36	FOX	Cold Case "Hubris"		King of the Hill	King of the Hill	The Simpsons	King of the Hill	Family Guy	American Dad	Fox First
	12	12	12	NBC	News (N)	NBC News	Football Night in America		(9:15) NFL Football New York Giants at Dallas Cowboys. (HDTV) (Live)				
sports	55	55	55	SCOR	(6) NFL Blitz		The WWE Experience		BodogFight		Strikeforce		Poker
	53	53	53	TSN	SportsCentre		Football Night in America		(9:15) NFL Football New York Giants at Dallas Cowboys. (HDTV) (Live)				
cable variety	16	16	16	A&E	CSI: Miami "Identity"		CSI: Miami (HDTV)		CSI: Miami "Three-Way"		CSI: Miami "Rush"		CSI: Miami
	70	70	70	APTN	Great Towns	MYTV	Rez Bluez		Music Speaks	The Mix	*Thunderheart* ★★★ (1992, Mystery)		
	37	37	37	BRVO	World Christmas		Arts & Minds	Bravo! Fact	Cooperman Howard Engel		*Erin Brockovich* ★★★ (2000, Drama)		
	49	49	49	COM	Laughs	Comics!	Winnipeg Comedy Festival		Laughs	Rick Mercer	The Simpsons	South Park	Comedy Net
	18	18	18	CNN	Lou Dobbs This Week (HDTV)		Newsroom		Special Investigations		Larry King Live		D.L. Hughley
	38	38	38	DISC	Cash Cab	How It's Made	MythBusters		Canada's Worst Driver		Canada's Worst Driver		MythBusters
	34	48	48	HGTV	Green Homes	Extreme Home	What's With That, Christmas		Outta Control Christmas		Extreme Christmas-Bigger		Holmes-Homes
	46	46	46	HIST	Finding the Fallen		NCIS "Mind Games"		Lost Worlds		*The Quick and the Dead* (1995, Western)		
	17	17	17	MM	Dance	Dance	So You Think You Can Dance Canada				So You Think You Can Dance Canada		
	206	206	206	PIX	(6:25) *Breaking Away*		(8:10) *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1981, Comedy), N!xau				*Spider* ★★★ (2002, Suspense)		
	39	39	39	SHOW	TBA	Trailer Park	The Guard (HDTV)		*The Christmas Choir* (2008, Drama) Jason Gedrick.				*Lady in Water*
	40	40	40	SLICE	Tori & Dean	Nearly Dead	Rich Bride, Poor Bride		Til Debt-Part	Wedding SOS	End of Leash	Spoiled Rotten	Biggest Loser
	21	21	21	TLC	Dateline: Real Life Mysteries		Pregnant for 46 Years		I Didn't Know I Was Pregnant		Mermaid Girl (HDTV)		Paralyzed
	22	22	22	W	*Christmas*	Grocery Bag	*Holiday Wishes* (2006, Drama) Amber Benson.				*The Christmas Shoes* (2002, Drama)		
	27	27	27	YTV	Garfield Cmas	Smurfy	Charlie Brown	Flintstone Xms	A Flintstone Christmas		(10:15) ALF	(10:45) ALF	Falcon Beach

Christmas TV begins

Rick's TV**Picks**

A Muppets Christmas: **Letters To Santa**

Air date: Dec. 17
Network: CTV

Whoopi Goldberg, Uma Thurman, Richard Griffiths and Jane Krakowski keep up the Muppets tradition of idiosyncratic guest choices on the latest holiday special from the people who brought you Peter Sellers singing Cigarettes, Whisky And Wild, Wild Women on the Muppet Show.

The Best Of The Hills **Parodies**

Air date: Saturday
Network: MTV

Making fun of The Hills is actually more fun than watching the thing, a fact that gets celebrated with this hour-long special collecting Hills take-offs — there are obviously more than enough.

Mall **Santas**

Air date: Dec. 18
Network: Global

It's not Miracle on 34th Street, but it's not Bad Santa, either. The world of the Mall Santa gets explored with three pro Santas whose lives might not exactly be Christmas every day.

RICK MCGINNIS/METRO CANADA

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GlobalStyle



Rock, Mad Men get more nods

AWARDS 30 Rock and Mad Men collected even more kudos on Wednesday.

The shows, which took home top series honors at this year's Emmys and earned Writers Guild Award nominations this week, are among the TV nominees for the 20th annual Producers Guild Awards, announced Wednesday. REUTERS

Spelling in talks to appear on 90210

Tori Spelling is reportedly in talks again to appear on 90210. Although nothing is official, Spelling's Donna Martin character may arrive for a couple of episodes in the spring, possibly for one of the shows that Jason Priestley will direct. **TVGUIDE.COM**

Going Out

Metro's 7th Heaven: Metro taps what's hot right now

1 Heath Ledger

Late actor Heath Ledger is garnering attention again for his work as the Joker in The Dark Knight, fresh out on DVD. He's been posthumously named best actor by the Australian Film Institute and best supporting actor by the Washington D.C. Area Film Critics Association.

2 Hollywood baby boom

The result of spring fever, perhaps? A bevy of celebrities announced new arrivals this week: Eric Mabius (boy), America's Next Top Model judge Nigel Barker (girl), Amy Jo Johnson (girl) and Jonny Lee Miller (boy).

3 Grey's Anatomy

The medical show has spawned off-set drama, with Brooke Smith, who played Dr. Erica Hahn, saying there are no hard feelings after being booted off the show, and now rumours that T.R. Knight is looking to leave.

4 The cape jacket

Stars like singer Kylie Minogue and actress Leighton Meester are wrapping up in sleeveless, hooded jackets, with beige and blue being the colours of choice, femalefirst.co.uk reports. The cape combines the warmth of a cardigan with the smart silhouette of a jacket.

5 Elisha Cuthbert

Actress Elisha Cuthbert has so far taken the high road by remaining mum on comments made by her ex, Dallas Stars Sean Avery. He referred to Cuthbert as "my sloppy seconds" in a TV interview while poking fun at rival and Cuthbert's current flame, Dion Phaneuf.

6 Kate Winslet

Oscar-nominated actress Kate Winslet is back on the big screen to show off her acting chops in The Reader and Revolutionary Road.

7 New Year's Eve

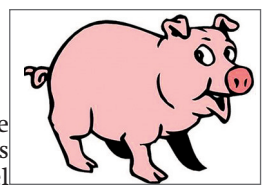
No plans? Head to New York to see the Jonas Brothers, Taylor Swift and Lionel Richie ring in 2009 on Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve.

Mix of Six

HOT & HAPPENING WEEKEND EVENTS AROUND THE CITY

Children's book launch

Friday, 5 p.m.-7 p.m.
Local Jo's Cafe, 2959 Oxford St.



Sick of reading the Grinch to the little ones? Halifax authors Zachariah Wells and Rachel Lebowitz, along with local illustrator Eric Orchard, will launch their children's book Anything But Hank, the tale of a boy and a pig in search of a name Friday with a reading.

Halifax Harbour waterfront exhibit

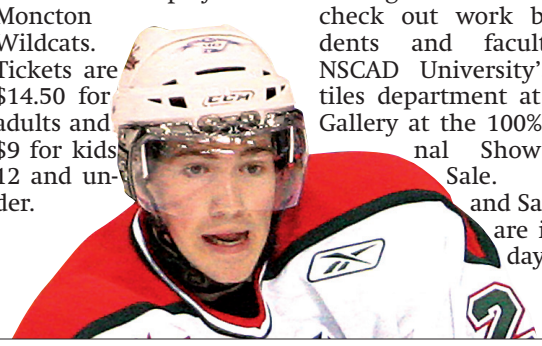
Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m.; all other days, 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water St.

Love your Lego? There's a Halifax Harbour exhibit featuring waterfront landmarks on display at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic that opened just this week.

Mooseheads game

Saturday, 7 p.m.
Metro Centre

Sports fan? Head out to the Metro Centre Saturday night to see the Halifax Mooseheads play the Moncton Wildcats. Tickets are $14.50 for adults and $9 for kids 12 and under.



100% Original Show and Sale

Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
Seeds Gallery, 1892 Hollis St.

If you're still looking for an original Christmas gift, check out work by students and faculty of NSCAD University's textiles department at Seeds Gallery at the 100% Original Show and Sale. Friday and Saturday are its last days.

Symphony Nova Scotia's Nutcracker

Saturday, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Rebecca Cohn Auditorium

Saturday is the last day for Symphony Nova Scotia's Nutcracker. Mermaid Theatre and Halifax Dance are also involved in this traditional holiday story of Clara, a young girl who wakes up in a fantasy world with her Nutcracker.



Gingerbread Sunday

Sunday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia

Ever dreamed of making your very own gingerbread house? On Sunday, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia is holding its annual holiday Gingerbread Sunday. Bring your own milk carton — it's the frame of the house — but the gallery provides the graham wafer walls, icing sugar mortar and – most importantly – the decorative candy. Gallery admission is $10 for adults, $3 for kids aged 6 to 17.

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– Michael Posner, *The Globe & Mail*

"This man leaves his audiences convulsing every time."
- Bill Brownstein, *Montreal Gazette*

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Coming-out series in works for Showtime

CABLE Showtime is developing a reality series documenting gay people coming out to friends and family.

The project is titled Way Out. In each episode, a closeted individual reveals their true sexual orientation during a group meeting.

"It's a show that has universal appeal because everyone can relate to having part of their lives hidden."
Bryn Freedman

Showtime has ordered a pilot presentation from Bryn Freedman, a former journalist and executive producer of A&E's Intervention, as part of its effort to bolster its unscripted slate.

"It's a show that has universal appeal because everybody can relate to having part of their lives hidden," said Freedman, who is producing the project with Evan Weiss. "The show is all about getting to know the person — why they have been reluctant to come out and what it looks like to be living a lie."

Out will show the person's closeted life, document the moment they reveal their orientation, then chart how relationships are changed. Although still in the pilot stage, Showtime is enthusiastic about the project.

REUTERS

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PRODUCTION DESIGNER NATHAN CROWLEY DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY WALLY PFISTER, A.S.C. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BENJAMIN MELNIKER MICHAEL E. USLAN KEVIN DE LA NOY THOMAS TULL BASED UPON BATMAN CHARACTERS CREATED BY BOB KANE AND PUBLISHED BY DC COMICS STORY BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN & DAVID S. GOYER SCREENPLAY BY JONATHAN NOLAN AND CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
PRODUCED BY CHARLES ROVEN EMMA THOMAS CHRISTOPHER NOLAN DIRECTED BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
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Taylor Hanson's wife gives birth to a son
Taylor Hanson, the middle brother of the rock trio Hanson, and his wife Natalie welcomed a son, Viggo Moriah, on Tuesday in Tulsa, Okla. **PEOPLE.COM**

Celebrity Buzz

Paltrow works on marriage

RELATIONSHIPS Gwyneth Paltrow will snub Christmas in her native America for the sake of her marriage to Coldplay rocker Chris Martin, according to reports.

Speculation about the state of their relationship mounted after Martin was pictured leaving the family's London home alone on Friday, the day of their fifth wedding anniversary.

But the actress is reportedly desperate to make her marriage work, and is sticking by her husband in London rather than spending the holidays with her family in the U.S.



"Gwyneth says she's totally fine. She's used the phrase 'perfectly happy' a bunch of times, and refuses to read any of the tabloid tales to the contrary," a source tells the New York Daily News.

The insider insists Paltrow is "staying overseas until the holidays are over," and is "trying to make their marriage better."

However, reports also allege Paltrow is keen to follow in the footsteps of her newly single friend, pop star Madonna, who announced she was divorcing husband Guy Ritchie in October.

"Gwyneth has the Madonna bug ... bad," the source adds. "It's eerie. Gwyneth acts normally until Madonna comes around, and then Gwyn is all about Madonna, all the time. Madge has even introduced Gwyneth to all her friends."

Representatives for Paltrow and Madonna both denied the reports, with the Oscar-winner's representative insisting the claims were "complete nonsense."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Aniston is amused

PEOPLE Jennifer Aniston has poked fun at the constant media interest in her relationship with ex-husband Brad Pitt and his partner Angelina Jolie, likening the trio to an "insane Bermuda triangle," imdb.com reports.

Speculation surrounding the actress' supposed rivalry with Jolie reached boiling point following Aniston's remarks to U.S. Vogue magazine in October, in which she branded Jolie "uncool."



The comments came after Jolie admitted she had fallen in love with Pitt while making 2005's Mr. and Mrs. Smith — when he was still married to Aniston.

But in a new interview with America's GQ magazine, in which Aniston poses naked apart from a men's tie, the star admits she finds the whole situation amusing.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Drew linked to Jason Segel

DATING Drew Barrymore has sparked reports she's dating funnyman Jason Segel, five months after ending her year-long romance with actor Justin Long, imdb.com reports.

The actress split from Long in July and has most recently been linked to Gossip Girl star Ed Westwick. But Barrymore has reportedly moved on again with the How I Met Your Mother star Segel, after the pair were allegedly spotted getting cosy at Los Angeles' Chateau Marmont on Nov. 28.

"Drew was all over Jason, rubbing him and kissing his face. He was on Cloud 9," a source tells Star magazine.



METRO NEWS SERVICES

Adams details proposal

MARRIAGE Actress Amy Adams came close to sabotaging her fiance's marriage proposal, because she was in a bad mood, imdb.com reports.

Adams announced her engagement to her artist boyfriend of six years, Darren Le Gallo, back in July. But she didn't reveal how an uncharacteristic bout of diva behaviour almost ruined the whole occasion.

"He had something big and dramatic planned," she says. "He was going to take me out to a really nice dinner and then take me to the top of the Empire State Building. He's scared of heights so he thought that would be significant. But I completely ruined it by saying I wanted to go see a play instead of going to dinner ... He proposed to me in Central Park in a carriage."



METRO NEWS SERVICES

Pitt admits early love with Jolie

RELATIONSHIPS Even though we all assumed it was true, Brad Pitt openly admits in the new issue of Rolling Stone that he "fell in love" with Angelina Jolie while he was still with Jennifer Aniston, popeater.com reports.

It's the same reason Mr. & Mrs. Smith tops as his favourite movie of all time, he said. "(Angelina) is not only the woman I love, but one of the people on this planet who I have the greatest respect for. I think she's as honorable as anyone I've ever met."



GETTY IMAGES PHOTOS

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Jessica wants wedding?

FAMILY Jessica Simpson reportedly wants to "get married in Texas in the summer and get pregnant soon after," femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The singer, who is dating football star Tony Romo, is said to be desperate to tie the knot and start her family, after seeing her younger sister Ashlee give birth to her own son Bronx Mowgli last month.

"Jessica recently sat Tony down for a baby talk," a friend of Jessica's told In Touch Weekly magazine. "Unlike Ashlee, Jessica doesn't want to get pregnant and then get married. She's a little more traditional, so she'd like to marry Tony first and then get pregnant, ideally on their honeymoon. She wants to get engaged in early 2009, married in Texas in the summer and get pregnant soon after."



It was recently revealed Jessica is "convinced" Dallas Cowboys star Romo is going to propose to her over Christmas.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Cate carries nuptial regret

PEOPLE Cate Blanchett regrets her wedding day, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The actress, who married playwright Andrew Upton 11 years ago, would love to relive the special day because she has no photographs to remember it by.

"The only moment of my life I would possibly recapture is getting remarried again because we didn't take any photographs," Blanchett says.



"We didn't have any money at the time and we couldn't afford a photographer."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Tyler dating Bing: report

DATING Actress Liv Tyler has found love with model/actress Elizabeth Hurley's multimillionaire ex-boyfriend Steve Bing, according to tabloid reports.

Tyler, 31 who has been single since splitting with husband Royston Langdon earlier this year, was reportedly spotted enjoying a romantic meal with movie producer Bing in Los Angeles on Nov. 30, imdb.com reports.



According to Star magazine, Bing — the father of Hurley's six-year-old son Damian — has been pursuing Tyler for some time.

"She was determined to make a good impression," a source tells Star magazine. "They were laughing and smiling throughout the meal, which lasted two hours."

METRO NEWS SERVICES



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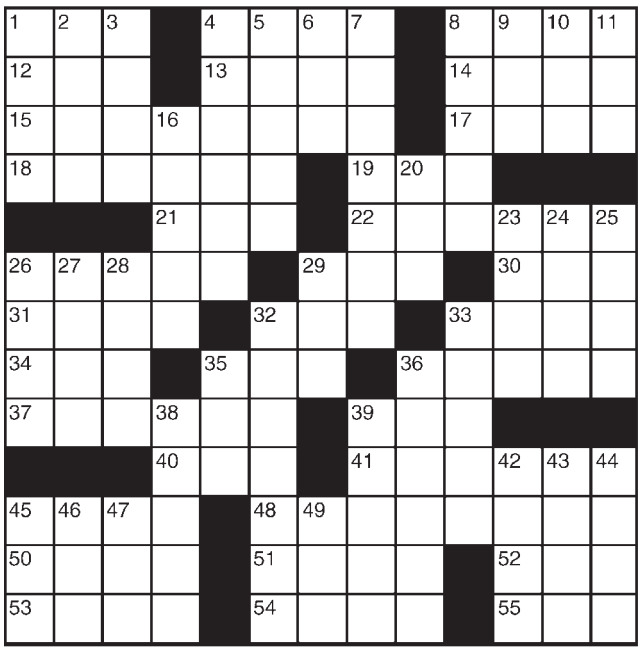
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Take Five



Crossword across

1 Standard score
4 Medicos
8 Benefit
12 A mean Amin
13 Maze goal
14 Stop up
15 Nickname for football's George Halas
17 Hodgepodge
18 High-IQ sort
19 Wall St. debut
21 Caviar base
22 Hit repeatedly
26 Sacrifice site
29 Shriner's chapeau
30 Before
31 U.K. conservative
32 Seafood selection
33 Soft cheese
34 Harem room
35 Grow
36 Ship of the desert
37 Apple variety
39 Book-spine abbr.
40 Literary collection
41 Fleet
45 Cereal choice
48 Litter member
50 Indonesian island
51 Cupid's alias
52 2-Down's companion
53 Stylish
54 Paddock parent
55 Homer's neighbor Flanders

Crossword down

1 Knight's backup
2 Leading man?
3 Philbin co-host
4 Credit card user
5 Daisy variety
6 U.S. spy org.
7 Like some shirts
8 Ice cream utensil
9 Every iota
10 Japanese pond fish
11 Diva's problem
16 Splendid setup
20 Dispensable candy
23 Salon request
24 Ontario's neighbor
25 Stagger
26 Having surmounted
27 California city
28 Snare
29 A clever person
32 Hors d'oeuvres
33 Mild
35 Victory
36 Bit part in a whodunit
38 "War of the Worlds" effect
39 Smoke or fog
42 Mideast gulf
43 Peace symbol
44 On in years
45 English channel?
46 "Go, team!"
47 "The Greatest"
49 Spoon-bender Geller

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY: Digits 1 through 9 will appear once in each zone – one zone is an outlined 3x3 grid within the larger puzzle grid. There are nine zones in the puzzle. Do not enter a digit into a box if it already appears elsewhere in the same zone, row across or column down the entire puzzle.

			1		5			
	5						7	
7	1	2				5	8	3
		8	5		2	9		
4								6
		3	6		7	4		
8	4	6				2	9	1
	9						5	
			8		9			

PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:

H	E	L	D	■	S	A	L	T	■	P	R	O		
O	B	O	E	■	O	B	E	Y	■	O	I	L		
P	O	R	C	E	L	A	I	N	■	R	D	A		
I	N	D	I	G	O	■	■	A	S	P	E	N		
■	■	■	D	O	■	P	I	N	T	O	■	■		
D	O	P	E	■	S	O	B	■	Y	I	P	S		
O	N	O	■	■	O	R	E	■	■	S	O	P		
G	E	R	M	■	A	C	T	■	Z	E	T	A		
■	■	R	A	L	P	H	■	A	E	■	■	■		
C	H	I	C	O	■	■	A	R	R	E	S	T		
R	I	D	■	P	O	R	T	F	O	L	I	O		
E	R	G	■	E	C	H	O	■	E	B	B	S		
W	E	E	■	S	T	O	P	■	S	A	S	S		

2	3	4	1	8	7	5	9	6
6	7	1	5	2	9	3	8	4
5	9	8	6	4	3	1	2	7
7	4	3	2	5	1	8	6	9
1	2	9	8	7	6	4	5	3
8	6	5	9	3	4	2	7	1
3	1	2	7	6	8	9	4	5
9	8	7	4	1	5	6	3	2
4	5	6	3	9	2	7	1	8

Find today's answers + play more games at metronews.ca

SUDOKU SOLVE TIME:

Under 13 min Genius
13-17 min.....Scholar
17-21 min Smart
21-25 min Not bad
25+ min.....Keep practising

Metro Recipe of the Day



Tuna Provençale on a Baguette

INGREDIENTS:

2 large tomatoes, peeled and chopped
5 black olives (not oil-packed), pitted and finely chopped
1 baguette, about 24 in. (60 cm) long
2 tbsp (25 mL) extra virgin olive oil
1 large onion
1 large green pepper
2 cans (170 g) tuna in water, drained
2 tbsp (25 mL) white wine vinegar
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

METHOD:

1. Mix tomatoes and olives in a medium bowl, and then let stand until juicy, about 15 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, cut baguette almost in half lengthwise (do not slice completely through). Open baguette like a book, being careful not to separate bread. Pull out about 1/2 cup (125 mL) of the soft centre with your hands. Using 1/2 tbsp (7 mL) oil, brush cut sides of the bread. Then spread on tomato mixture and any juices that have collected in the bowl.
3. Cut onion in half through stem end, then cut crosswise into thin semicircles. Cut pepper in half, then crosswise into thin semicircles. Layer onion, green pepper and tuna over tomato mixture. Whisk vinegar, garlic and remaining oil in a small bowl. Drizzle over tuna.
4. Wrap stuffed baguette tightly in plastic wrap. Weigh down with a heavy frying pan and let stand at room temperature until the ingredients have soaked into bread, 30 minutes. Cut diagonally into 4 equal pieces before serving.

SERVES 4

rd.ca
For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to **rd.ca** or check out **Key Ingredients in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!**



Horoscopes

AVATAR VENUS

ARIES
MARCH 21-APRIL 20
A trustworthy person has remarkable news. A disturbance can produce a warning. You'll want to escape from a weird dilemma.

TAURUS
APRIL 21-MAY 21
Reorganize a sluggish system right away. A threat will jog somebody's memory. You can get ahead by leaving a sad place.

GEMINI
MAY 22-JUNE 21
An amiable manner influences a realist. Don't count your blessings in public. You shouldn't push optimism to a cynical person.

CANCER
JUNE 22-JULY 22
A prosperous guy needs medical attention. Shabbiness will not be acceptable to a lady. Don't be a fool when crossing a street.

LEO
JULY 23-AUG 23
Check your documents carefully. A magnificent man takes the other side in a conflict. Difficulties arise when you are too aggressive.

VIRGO
AUG 24-SEPT 22
Time passes slowly while awaiting a disclosure. A decent man gives a warning about unreliability. An alarmist rouses the neighbourhood.

LIBRA
SEPT 23-OCT 23
A disagreement about benefits will lead to teasing. A friend will happily agree to make changes. A separation leads to a breakthrough.

SCORPIO
OCT 24-NOV 22
Show your support when a relationship begins. An eccentric person is making a big mistake. A friend causes a hullabaloo.

SAGITTARIUS
NOV 23-DEC 21
Some people will be switching partners. By not worrying, you can correct a problem. Yield to the facts, no matter what happens.

CAPRICORN
DEC 22-JAN 20
A lenient person will be receptive. A disturbing tempest threatens to interfere with funds. It's wiser not to complain about hostility.

AQUARIUS
JAN 21-FEB 18
A lenient person will be receptive. A disturbing tempest threatens to interfere with funds. It's wiser not to complain about hostility.

PISCES
FEB 19-MARCH 20
An ill friend will discuss his personal agony. Your lack of concern is the point of a story. Keep your side of a bargain.





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